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# MRS GASKELL

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ELIZABETH CLEGHORN GASKELL
(1810-1865)

*By permission of the National Portrait Gallery*

# MRS GASKELL

## HER LIFE AND WORK

*By*

A. STANTON WHITFIELD

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TO

C. H. HERFORD, D. Litt.

*Emeritus Professor of English Literature in the University of Manchester*

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# PREFACE

In the collection of material for this small book, the writer gladly acknowledges his indebtedness to Mr Bryan T. Holland (Mrs Gaskell's grandson), to Professor C. H. Herford (whose good name made Manchester his friend), and to Mr A. J. Green, Librarian of the Special Collections at the Manchester Public Libraries. For welcome information and answers to enquiries, he is also indebted to the late Miss Katherine Lowndes, Miss Margaret Froude, Lord Hatherton, Baron Shuttleworth of Gawthorpe, the late Sir Edmund Gosse, Prof. C. W. Pipkin (of Louisiana State Univ., U.S.A.), the late Mr Clement K. Shorter, and Mr F. Thompson (Librarian to the Duke of Devonshire). Finally he must thank his friends Mr. J. H. Lazarus, B.C.L., M.A. (Oxon.), and Mr J. Isaacs, M.A., Lecturer in English Language and Literature in the University of London, for their generous assistance in reading the proofs of the volume and seeing it through the press.

Various ironies of circumstance are responsible for the late appearance of this study, which was finished in 1925. It was the writer's intention to revise parts, if not to revise the whole of it, but such contingencies as he could not foresee have taken place and he is now far away from any adequate library.

A. STANTON WHITFIELD

*Niigata-si, Japan,*
December, 1928.

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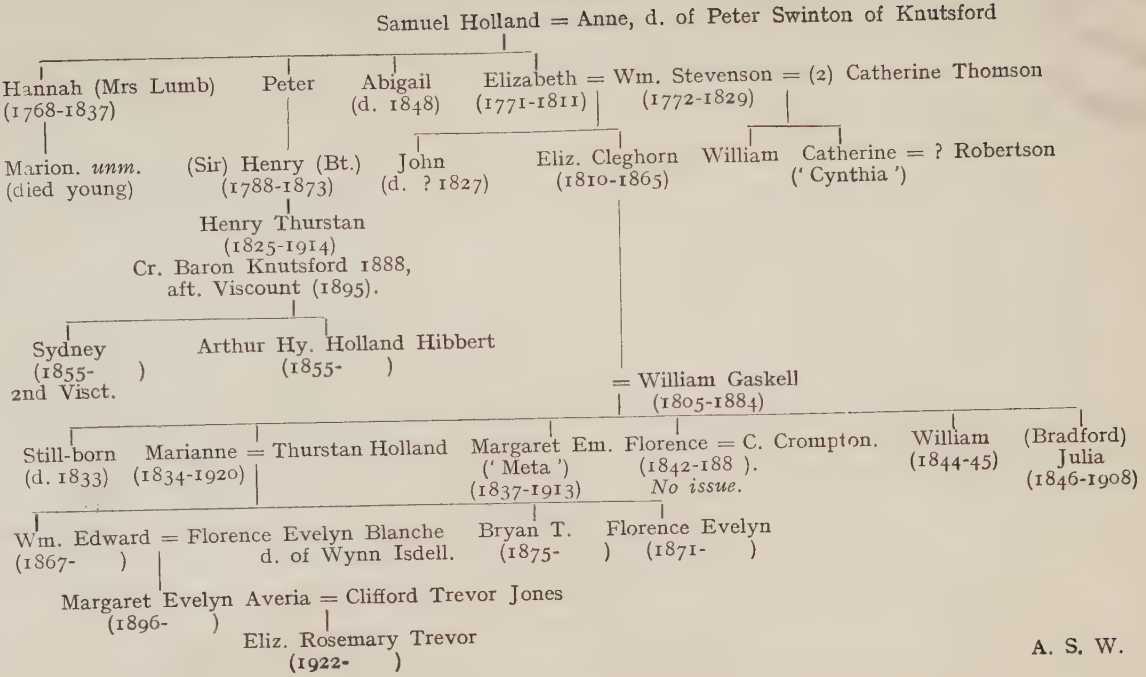
*'And those great dead of the Victorian line.*
*They passed, they passed, but cannot pass away,*
*For England feels them in her blood like wine.'*

—FRANCIS THOMPSON


Samuel Holland = Anne, d. of Peter Swinton of Knutsford
Hannah (Mrs Lumb) (1768-1837)
Peter
Abigail (d. 1848)
Elizabeth = Wm. Stevenson = (2) Catherine Thomson (1771-1811) (1772-1829)
Marion. unm. (died young)
(Sir) Henry (Bt.) (1788-1873)
John (d. ? 1827)
Eliz. Cleghorn (1810-1865)
William
Catherine = ? Robertson ('Cynthia')
Henry Thurstan (1825-1914) Cr. Baron Knutsford 1888, aft. Viscount (1895).
Sydney (1855- ) 2nd Visct.
Arthur Hy. Holland Hibbert (1855- )
= William Gaskell (1805-1884)
Still-born (d. 1833)
Marianne = Thurstan Holland (1834-1920)
Margaret Em. ('Meta') (1837-1913)
Florence = C. Crompton. (1842-188 ). No issue.
William (1844-45)
(Bradford) Julia (1846-1908)
Wm. Edward (1867- )
Florence Evelyn Blanche d. of Wynn Isdell.
Bryan T. (1875- )
Florence Evelyn (1871- )
Margaret Evelyn Averia (1896- )
Clifford Trevor Jones
Eliz. Rosemary Trevor (1922- )

A. S. W.

## *Chapter I*

## *ELIZABETH CLEGHORN STEVENSON*

ELIZABETH CLEGHORN GASKELL was born on September 29, 1810. Her mother, Elizabeth Stevenson, died in the following year.[1] Her father died when she was nineteen, hardly realizing that his daughter was a child of promise.

Let us draw aside the curtain of the years and sink our point of view to the moment of our heroine's birth. It is as though the Fates have already mapped out the thread of her life. Inside No. 1, Belle Vue, Old Lindsey Row, Chelsea,[2] lies a pale woman; the eternal pain and joy of motherhood are throbbing in unison, and the future novelist and biographer

[1] Mrs Gaskell did not lose her mother 'within a month after her birth' etc., as stated by Sir Adolphus Ward in his introduction to the *Knutsford Edition* of her works (p. xviii). Mrs Stevenson was buried on October 29, 1811.

[2] *Now* 93, Cheyne Walk.

has given her first fanfare to the world. Outside 'the sunset breezes shiver' where passed the old Téméraire to her last resting-place. Wellington has just thrashed André Masséna on the heights of Busaco, eight months ago Crabbe's *The Borough* was published, the manuscript of *Waverley* is lying aside in an old desk and everyone is fingering the 'Harp of the North!' Master Tennyson is mewling in his cradle, and yesterday little Dizzy was sent to the 'very high-class establishment' of a Miss Roper at Islington. In two months' time poor George the Third, who has long ceased to adorn society with correct facetiousness, is to shriek at the sight of Dr Willis and his leeches. The Prime Minister is not yet assassinated, but next year will be marked by the appearance of the static and delightful Jane Austen's *Sense and Sensibility*. Shelley, haunted by wild and extravagant romances, is soon to be a freshman in Oxford, and Darwin was born last year. The sanitary conditions in most of the factories and the long hours of labour seem intolerable, but on the whole the long quiet is giving way to the evolutionary view. Vulgar advertisements and

a machine driven world are shortly to take the place of the ignorant and rough, beautiful and poetical, common life. Such was the ominous dawn by which the future Mrs Gaskell was heralded.

Elizabeth was the second of two children by William Stevenson's first marriage. Her mother was a daughter of Samuel Holland, of Sandlebridge in Cheshire, great-grandfather of the present Viscount Knutsford, and her paternal grandmother was a cousin to James Thomson the poet. Her father, William Stevenson, was the son of an officer in the Royal Navy. Originally a private tutor in a family at Bruges, he prospered rapidly in unworldly things, was engaged as a classical tutor and preacher in Manchester,[1] becoming (like Minister Holman in *Cousin Phillis*) farmer, editor, author; lastly he obtained the office of Keeper of the Records to the Treasury. Soon afterwards he declined the honour of a Professorship of Technology in the University of Kharkov, offered to him by Alexander I of Russia. He wrote a life of

[1] He performed the duties of a Unitarian minister at Doblane, nr. Manchester.

Caxton, made an *Agricultural Survey of Dorset*, compiled the *Annual Register* for several years, and contributed to the *Edinburgh Review*, *Westminster*, and other periodicals. In deportment Stevenson

> was not only mild and inoffensive, but kind and benevolent ; and where opportunity was afforded him, he was a zealous and active friend. He had little of the pride of authorship ; and so much of the disinterestedness which belongs to a philosophic mind, that it was difficult for public attention to find him out.[1]

In June, 1811, Elizabeth's father removed with his family to 3, Beaufort Row, and there in the following October his first wife died. Soon afterwards his little girl was taken down to Knutsford, in Cheshire, where lived her mother's sister, Mrs Lumb. Hannah Holland had unfortunately married a lunatic named Lumb. He was confined, and his wife and a delicate little cripple daughter lived alone in a house on the heath of the village afterwards immortalized as 'Cranford'. With them Elizabeth spent her childhood and cheered her cousin Marion.

[1] *The Annual Biography and Obituary of* 1829, Part I, Memoir no. XIV.

A few years later in 1814, Stevenson married again. His second wife was a Miss Thomson, daughter of an American colonist, by whom he had two children. He lived unhappily with this lady, and Miss Thomson and her daughter are shadowed forth in the Mrs Gibson and Cynthia of *Wives and Daughters*. Indeed, most of Mrs Gaskell's early experiences sank deep into her imaginative mind. The real events which *suggested* her novels took place, but her characters were not *dictated* by reality. What she said of Charlotte Brontë's writings is equally true of her own. When she drew her characters from the life 'they were placed in new positions, and figured away in scenes far different to those in which their actual life had been passed'.[1]

We get glimpses of Miss Stevenson in these early years. Now she is at her grandfather's at Sandlebridge ("Heathbridge"); now she is attending the old Brook Street Chapel, which she was afterwards to describe most faithfully in *Ruth*; now on the way to her father in London, huddled up in one corner of a coach and delighting in the 'yard of tin'. At other times she

[1] *Life of Charlotte Brontë*, 1857, vol. II, p. 115.

is tripping to the house of her uncle, Mr Peter Holland, the village surgeon, or creeping out on to the moorland to pick the marsh saxifrage which she loved so well. But her best joy is a letter or visit from her only brother, John, who later became a lieutenant in the Merchant Service, and who mysteriously disappeared at the end of a voyage in an East Indiaman. He was the original of Peter in *Cranford*, Charles of *Disappearances*, and Frederick in *North and South*, and he it was who first suspected that his sister had a talent at letter writing.[1]

In her fourteenth or fifteenth year she was sent to the Miss Byerley's school at Stratford-on-Avon. The old schoolhouse 'Avon-bank', which adjoined the parish churchyard, was once the home of Shakespeare. The school was much in advance of its time, and the fees were about £140 a year. It had a good reputation and the head-mistress paid special attention to English, French, and Italian.

Perhaps the Miss Byerleys were like Trollope's Miss Prettyman; certain it is that they were benignant, charitable, and the most conscientious

[1] c. 1826. Private information.

of schoolmistresses. It is equally certain that they were like the Misses Ponsonby in *Catherine Furze*, who did not walk about as modern ladies do, without their clothes. Curiously enough, there were live women's hearts beneath their heavy drapings. They, like Charlotte Brontë's old mistress, taught their pupils ' to think, to analyze, to reject, to appreciate '.

Elizabeth Stevenson arrived in Stratford on one chilly eve, and felt unwilling to leave the guard of the coach. There she was, however, and there was no help for it; on to the school she went, feeling tired, hungry, and cold. A good meal and conversation with the ever-kind and dignified Miss Byerley charmed away her first melancholy, and shortly afterwards a little waiting-maid was summoned to show her to her room.

> It was so small. . . . The walls were white-washed; the bed was of white dimity. There was a small piece of red stair-carpet on each side of the bed, and two chairs. In a closet adjoining were my washstand and toilet-table. There was a text of scripture painted on the wall right opposite to my bed; and below hung a print, common enough in those days, of King George and Queen Charlotte,

with all their numerous children, down to the little Princess Amelia in a go-cart. On each side hung a small portrait, also engraved; on the left it was Louis the Sixteenth; on the other Marie Antoinette. On the chimney-piece there was a tinderbox and a prayer-book. I do not remember anything else in the room. Indeed, in those days people did not dream of writing-tables, and inkstands, and portfolios, and easy-chairs, and what not. We were taught to go into our bedrooms for the purposes of dressing, and sleeping, and praying.[1]

On the whole Elizabeth's school-days were happy; she became the friend of her mistresses, and in later years kept up a correspondence with them. She was soon recognized as one of the most promising of their pupils, remaining with them for five years, including holiday times, during which period she never took tea out alone once.[2] She learnt French, Italian, something of Latin, drawing, and dancing. After leaving 'Avonbank' she continued her French and dancing lessons under a Monsieur Rogier who, in his earlier years, had instructed William Pitt.

Stratford and its neighbourhood made deep

[1] *Round the Sofa*, 1859, vol. I (ch. I of *My Lady Ludlow*).

[2] Private information.

and lasting impressions on her receptive and imaginative mind, and perhaps these early associations contributed largely to her fondness for books, the countryside, and her wistful outlook upon the past. In later years she recorded one of her girlish impressions in Howitt's *Visits to Remarkable Places* (1838), by way of a charming description of Clopton Hall.

Miss Stevenson left Stratford unqualified to take the Cambridge Higher Certificate or a 'first' in any modern Honour School. She left with something which no competitive examination alone can give: an awakened mental activity, looking towards humanity and art.

Shortly after Elizabeth's return to Knutsford in 1827 her father required her presence at Chelsea, where she lived unhappily with her step-mother. William Stevenson's health was failing, repeated attacks of illness forcing him to relinquish all mental exercise, and the winter of 1828 was a sad one for his eldest daughter. Years later she writes:

> That winter was full of incidents in our home. . . . My father was stricken down from health into confirmed invalidism, by a paralytic stroke . . .

> and my interests were confined to the fluctuating reports of a sick room. . . . My hopes, my fears were centred in one frail human body—my dearly beloved, my most loving father.[1]

It seems hard to deny the autobiographical element in these lines.

In the following March[2] 'the literary and scientific world sustained a great loss in the death of Mr. Stevenson', and Elizabeth was glad to quit the society of his second wife for the more congenial companionship of her uncle Swinton Holland, who lived in Park Lane.

After a brief sojourn with her Uncle, the pretty girl, who was swiftly passing into womanhood, returned to her Aunt Lumb at Knutsford. She stayed there until the Autumn following her father's death, when an arrangement was made with the Rev. William Turner, an esteemed Unitarian minister of Newcastle-on-Tyne, whereby he became her guardian for two years. Sir Adolphus Ward says that Turner was learned and public-spirited and a 'very remarkable man, from whom some features in the sym-

[1] *My French Master*, ch. II.

[2] March 20th, or 22nd, 1829.

pathetic character of Thurstan Benson in "Ruth" are supposed to have been derived'.

In Newcastle, then, Miss Stevenson spent two winters, and some of the novelist's early experiences are drawn in *Ruth*. The presentment of "Eccleston", with its smoke 'hanging over the plain', in that book, is undoubtedly founded on Newcastle.

About the same time that George Eliot was transferred from Miss Wallington's school at Nuneaton to the Miss Franklyns at Coventry, in 1831, Elizabeth left the town of chemicals, iron, and smoke and went to Edinburgh. Her impressions of that beautiful city lingered long enough in her mind to inspire a few autobiographical touches in *Round the Sofa* (1859). How many times did she see her father's native town in dreams? Whoever has once seen Edinburgh must see it again in dreams, Charlotte Brontë told Mrs Gaskell years later.

During this visit her beauty was greatly admired, and Thompson, the miniature-painter, drew her portrait. David Dunbar had sculptured[1] her two years before, an event which

[1] See Bibliographical Appendix, under Iconography.

seems to imply that this was not her first stay in Edinburgh.

The future novelist at this time was of medium height, and in her bearing she was graceful and dignified. Her features were delicately chiselled, and her fair complexioned brow was especially fine. Mazes of dark hair loomed above it, whilst below her small grey-blue eyes 'to be looked into rather than at' shone with unusual brightness, sparkling out *esprit* and fun. Her well-proportioned high nose formed a noble contour to a handsome face, and her mouth seemed, in spite of its firmness, to be ever playing into a sweet and baffling smile like that of Leonardo's *Monna Lisa*.

## *Chapter II*

## *MRS GASKELL*

It was through her connection with the Rev. William Turner that Miss Stevenson became acquainted with her future husband. Mr Turner's eldest daughter, Mary, had married the Rev. John Gooch Robberds, and William Gaskell was his junior minister at the Cross Street Unitarian Chapel, Manchester. The Robberds resided at Greenheys, the fields of which are described so faithfully in *Mary Barton*. The district was named after the house in which De Quincey was born.

The Rev. William Gaskell was about twenty-five years of age when he first met his bride-to-be. He was a graduate of Glasgow University, a plodding man of Greek and Latin of good conduct and singular talents.

A sound student, his love of books developed in him a thorough knowledge of English literature, culture, refined taste, and critical power. One of his ancestors was Rebecca Gaskell, the mother of the great Robert Clive who—it is interesting to note—received part of his education at Knutsford. Mr Gaskell was destined to be a minister of the Cross Street Unitarian Chapel to the end of his days, and his unbounded zeal for home mission work and education continued to the sunset of his life. Thackeray's daughter says that his congregations were outside as well as inside chapel walls, and she testifies to the respect and affection which he inspired in different people. He wrote over thirty pamphlets—valuable at least as signs of intellectual activity—many hymns, and best of all he encouraged and instigated the writing of *Mary Barton*. For some years he was Professor of English Literature at the Manchester New College (now Manchester College, Oxford), and up to 1866 he lectured at Owen's College. The present Master of Peterhouse[1] remembers the enthusiasm which he instilled into his students.

[1] Now deceased.

On August 30, 1832, Elizabeth Cleghorn Stevenson became Mrs Gaskell. The marriage ceremony was performed at the Parish Church of St John, Knutsford. Writing to a friend soon after the wedding Mrs Gaskell says that Aunt Lumb wondered how such a man as William could ever take a fancy to such a giddy, thoughtless little thing as Elizabeth Stevenson.[1] Indeed, she was merry, but her jollity never injured her purity of mind. Deep down, her soul was pensive and sad; that sad amiable weakness that comes from an intense love of humanity.

And her husband? He was no flatterer, nor was he gay in small-talk, and he rarely outwardly expressed his affection or sympathy. Sincere and steady, there was a calm in his integrity, and his attentions were unobtrusive and simple.

Together they united both fortune and affection, and were just the happy couple they ought to have been.

Mr and Mrs Gaskell spent their honeymoon in the beautiful vale of Ffestiniog[2] where,

[1] Private information.

[2] Veiled with Silverdale in chs. V and XXIV of *Ruth*.

as Lord Lyttelton discovered in 1756, 'with the woman one loves one may pass an age, and think it a day'.

Late in September, the young minister and his wife entered their home at 14, Dover Street, Manchester.

From the dawn of her married life onwards, Mrs Gaskell ruled her house with care and attention, and knew the difficult art of becoming a friend to her servants. Although she loved to make jams and tea-cakes, she was not devoted to cooking, nor was she an adept in that art. But her energy was untiring and she did not exhaust herself in household cares.

The working classes of Manchester aroused her deep interest in many of the problems connected with their lives. With her ingenuous outlook she viewed the spectacle of life and helped to sun drab 'Drumble' with her smile. She would have said with Marcus Aurelius and Terence, 'nothing which affects man can be indifferent to me'. And, to a great-hearted woman, how could it have been otherwise at a period when many children worked fourteen hours a day and received 2/6 a week, and nearly

70 per cent. of the women-folk worked in the mills. Fortunately Lord Ashley's endeavours were at hand.[1] Certain children who attended Sunday schools were so ignorant and dialect-bound that they did not know whether Jesus Christ was a King of London or an apostle!

No wonder that the early association (1832) of Mrs Gaskell with Sunday schools was widely cherished. A. Cobden Smith[2] says that

> her name appeared in the list of workers to the end of her life in 1865. Richard Wade told of Mrs Gaskell, that when, owing to the cares of a family she was not able to teach on a Sunday, she had a class of adult girls at her house . . . on a week evening and took great interest in them.

Another writer notes that

> in the time of the cotton famine she was one of an indefatigable band of workers who endeavoured to alleviate the distress so widely spread throughout Lancashire, and gave valuable assistance in the establishment and practical working of schools for teaching reading and needlework to the factory girls during the period of voluntary idleness.[3]

[1] Cazamian: *Le roman social*, p. 120. [2] *Miss Julia Gaskell 1846-1908: a Memorial Address*, p. 7. [3] *Record of Unitarian Worthies*, 1876, p. 124.

Her sympathies were ever on the side of the suffering and frail, and many of the characters in her books are animated and exalted by suffering; and that made her the unknown idol of those who suffered.

Mrs Gaskell began her literary life as a poet, and to the year 1836 belong her two poetic efforts, the second of which—written in collaboration with her husband—is interesting inasmuch as it contains the germ of a passage afterwards developed in *Mary Barton*.[1] The other pathetic lines were written *On Visiting the Grave of my Still-born Little Girl*. It is remarkable how much of the novelist's work was inspired directly by her children.

Between March 1835 and October 1838 she penned a little "Diary"[2] for her eldest daughter, Marianne, begun when her little girl was nearly six months old. It is full of love for her darling.

The greater part of the summer of 1836 was passed in visits to Knutsford, Warrington, and the seaside.

Not many months before it pleased Providence

[1] *Sketches among the Poor*. (From *Blackwood's Mag.*, vol. xli. no. cclv., Jan. 1837, pp. 48-51.) [2] Kindly lent to me by her grandson, Mr Bryan T. Holland.

to place a young lady of Kensington in the station of Queen of England (Feb. 5, 1837), 'Meta' (Margaret Emily), Mrs Gaskell's third child, was born.

On September 28, 1837, she was christened by Mr Turner of Newcastle. Meanwhile Aunt Lumb was ill, and on March 10, 1837, Mrs Gaskell was summoned to Knutsford, where 'my more than mother' had had a paralytic stroke. For eight weeks her niece, herself in delicate health, nursed her dearest friend, who died on May 1.

The following year William Howitt invited suggestions for his intended *Visits to Remarkable Places*. Mrs Gaskell wrote him a letter recording her girlish impressions of Clopton Hall, near Stratford-on-Avon. Mary Howitt, in her *Autobiography*, says that her husband so admired Mrs Gaskell's powerful and graphic description of the old house 'that, in replying, he urged his correspondent to use her pen "for the public benefit"'.

The frivolous girl, good mother, match-maker, affectionate letter writer, 'factotum della citta', as she called herself in later years, is speeding

on towards the heyday of her multifarious life.

In 1839 her husband is busy writing *Temperance Rhymes* and taking brandy and water on journeys and sherry at home. Anthony Trollope's mother, unknown to the Gaskells, is in Manchester misapplying her sharp and caustic wit by gathering materials for *Michael Armstrong*, a cheap forerunner of our heroine's social novels. Her book shows how external were those materials.

An interesting incident brightened the beginning of the year 1840, when Francis W. Newman —younger brother of the Cardinal—became a classical professor at the Manchester New College. Mrs Gaskell became acquainted with this remarkable free-thinker, and in her letters she expresses her ardent admiration for his wide range of thought and noble qualities. How interesting it would be to have her views on his *Phases of Faith*.

Two years later, when the darkest clouds were hovering over Manchester, Mr and Mrs Gaskell removed from Dover Street to 121, Upper Rumford Street. 'The state of society in England was never yet paralleled in history',

wrote Dr Arnold, who had sympathized warmly with *Chartism*, to Carlyle. High prices and low wages followed a series of bad harvests, the sanitary conditions were indescribable, hundreds of families were without a bed to lie on, and many were laid low with typhus 'at home' in damp and foetid cellars. No wonder that Ebenezer Elliott rhymed:

> Doctor said air was best—
> Food we had none;
> Father, with panting breast,
> Groaned to be gone.
> Now he is with the blest!
> Mother says death is best!
> We have no place of rest.
> Yes, ye have one.

and Mrs Gaskell became anxious

> to give some utterance to the agony which, from time to time, convulses this dumb people; the agony of suffering without the sympathy of the happy, or of erroneously believing that such is the case. If it be an error that the woes, which come with ever returning tide-like flood to overwhelm the workmen in our manufacturing towns, pass unregarded by all but the sufferers, it is at any rate an error so bitter in its consequences to all parties, that whatever public effort can do in the way of merciful deeds, or helpless love in the way of widows' mites could do, should be

done, and that speedily, to disabuse the work-people of so miserable a misapprehension. At present they seem to me to be left in a state, wherein lamentations and tears are thrown aside as useless, but in which the lips are compressed for curses, and the hands clenched and ready to smite.[1]

And then came her own private sorrow. In 1845 Mr and Mrs Gaskell revisited Ffestiniog, with their eldest daughter little Marianne and their baby son, Willie. The children contracted scarlet fever, and on August 10 little William died. Mrs Gaskell's grief was intense; perhaps the loss of her little boy was the greatest sorrow of her life. She was unwell for some time afterwards, and it was during her days of convalescence that her husband persuaded her to attempt a long novel. This was *Mary Barton*.

'*O! quelle musique douloureuse dans ces sanglots!*' wrote Émile Montégut[2] forty years afterwards. And the sobs were those of a mother who poured forth the poetry in her child's eyes through her own. *Ruth*, too, is partly the product of the same association of ideas.

[1] From the Preface to the First edition of *Mary Barton*.

[2] *Ecrivains Modernes de l'Angleterre*, II *Série*, 1889, p. 101.

*Mary Barton*[1] was sold to Messrs Chapman & Hall for £100, and it was published anonymously in the autumn of 1848. The two nations, the rich and the poor, seized the story. Some took its honey, others were stung, but all in their secret hearts must have acknowledged its large humanity. Within a month of its publication Carlyle wrote to the authoress. His impressions were unusually favourable: he found the writer's character to be beautiful, cheerfully pious, social, clear, and observant, and the book far above the ordinary novel; both entertaining and enlightening, that will do everyone good to read. Mrs Gaskell's writing he thought very beautiful, soft, clear and natural. 'May you live long to write good books', he concluded.[2] Later Maria Edgeworth Landor—who wrote a poem to 'the paraclete of the Bartons', Samuel Bamford, and Dickens, added their praise.

On the other hand many discovered sins and faults, and certain critics honestly thought that the new author had misrepresented the attitude

[1] Written between the years 1845-1846.

[2] Private information. (Letter of T. Carlyle, Nov. 8, 1848.)

of the employers towards their work-people. Of this more is told elsewhere. For the moment suffice it to say that Mrs. Gaskell did not mind the angry feelings stirred by *Mary Barton*. She wanted its *truth* to be acknowledged. She knew that recognized evils are on the way towards remedy.

Three years before the appearance of her first novel, the Gaskells moved again, this time to a larger and commodious detached house in Plymouth Grove, and it was not long before they were able to keep five women servants, including a German maid, and a gardener.

In October, 1848, Mrs Gaskell visited Southport. She stayed with her friend Emily Winkworth—the sister of Catherine the miscellaneous writer and Susanna the translator—at 1, Waterloo Terrace [1] and 'cast a halo of glory round it'. Emily writes (27 October):

> It *was* so delightful having her here all to ourselves . . . everything I see of her makes me admire and love her more. She is so full of information on such various subjects, has seen so many clever and curious people, so much life altogether;—and then she is so

[1] Private information.

thoro'ly good. Her thoughtful kindness and gentleness to me, because I was ill, was as great as if I were one of her own children.

The same lady records that when *Mary Barton* came out Mrs Gaskell was at Plas Penrhyn. One day, at breakfast time, somebody suggested that the book was written by her, whereupon Mrs Gaskell popped down under the table to look for something which wasn't there!

Fame has already begun to dog her footsteps. On May 12, 1849, she dined with Charles Dickens, who gave a dinner to commemorate the success of *David Copperfield*. Mr and Mrs Carlyle, Thackeray, Jerrold, Hablot Browne, and Forster were there, amongst others.

She returned from Town to Manchester with J. A. Froude, and had a grave talk with him in the railway carriage.[1] Possibly the future historian consulted Mrs Gaskell about the offer to him of a commercial position by Mr Darbyshire, a manufacturer to whom Froude had acted as resident tutor. Curiously enough Mr Hale of *North and South* resembles Froude in not a few features.

[1] Private information.

During the summer of this same year in which they met and saw Macready in and out of *Lear*, Mr and Mrs Gaskell sojourned at a farmstead near Skelwith, in the lake district—

> a grey stone house, and a square of farm buildings surrounding a green space of rough turf, in the midst of which stands a mighty, funereal, umbrageous yew, making a solemn shadow, as of death, in the very heart and centre of the light and heat of the brightest summer day.[1]

There they met Crabb Robinson, the diarist, and a leader in society, who persuaded Wordsworth to see them. We have no further record of this meeting. Boswell was absent; no one garnered their intellectual gossip. Did they discuss the severe and terrible in love and art? There, at least, Mrs Gaskell and Wordsworth had an affinity in ideas. Most likely they did not. Perhaps she venerated Wordsworth's lofty sentiments and remained quiet.

She never saw the poet again; the heavy sorrows which fell thick upon the latter years of the old man were furrowed deep on his

[1] *Half a Lifetime Ago*, ch. I. (In *Household Words*, Oct. 6, etc., 1855).

brow. In less than ten months he was laid in Grasmere churchyard.[1]

Many were the vicissitudes which, in the course of the next four seasons, befell the authoress of *Mary Barton*. Early in October, 1849, she wrote to John Forster—afterwards the biographer of Dickens—begging him to ask Tennyson to give a copy of his poems to Samuel Bamford, the Lancashire weaver and poet.[2] The book arrived without a shadow of damage, at the end of the next month, and on the Laureate's behalf Mrs Gaskell presented the volume to Bamford.

'Well, Mr Bamford', she said, 'suppose you set off this Christmas and walk and thank the poet?' Bamford indignantly looked up from his cherished book and said from his heart: 'Lord, woman! walking won't reach him. I can no more reach him by walking, than if he were a skylark high above my head'.

Jan. 31, 1850 of the new year saw the beginning of Dickens' correspondence with Mrs

[1] See also Appendix I.

[2] See *Manchester City News*, Feb. 5, 1916 (Gaskell letter, Oct. 8, 1849).

Gaskell, when he asked her to contribute to *Household Words*.

'My dear Mrs Gaskell,' he writes, 'You may perhaps have seen an announcement in the papers of my intention to start a new cheap weekly journal of general literature.

I do not know what your literary vows of temperance or abstinence may be, but I do honestly know that there is no living English writer whose aid I would desire to enlist in preference to the authoress of "Mary Barton" (a book that most profoundly affected and impressed me), I venture to ask you whether you can give me any hope that you will write a short tale, or any number of tales, for the projected pages.

No writer's name will be used, neither my own nor any other; every paper will be published without any signature, and all will seem to express the general mind and purpose of the journal, which is the raising up of those that are down, and the general improvement of our social condition. I should set a value on your help which your modesty can hardly imagine; and I am perfectly sure that the least result of your reflection or observation in respect of the life around you, would attract attention and do good.

If you could and would prefer to speak to me on the subject, I should be very glad indeed to come to Manchester for a few hours and explain anything you might wish to know. My unaffected and great admiration of your book makes me very earnest in

all relating to you. Forgive my troubling you for this reason, and believe me ever,

Faithfully yours,

CHARLES DICKENS.

P.S.—Mrs Dickens and her sister send their love.'

Mrs Gaskell had not any literary vows of abstinence, and *Lizzie Leigh*, for which Boz paid twenty pounds, appeared in the first number of the new periodical (March, 1850).

Meanwhile, she was contributing to other papers—*Howitt's Journal* and *The Sunday School Penny Magazine* and writing *Mr Harrison's Confessions*, to a certain extent an anticipation of *Cranford*, for *The Ladies Companion*. *The Sexton's Hero* was reprinted for 'the benefit of the Macclesfield Public Baths and Wash-houses', and she came to terms about the same time for a sextodecimo of her *Libbie Marsh's Three Eras*, originally printed in 1847. Leigh Hunt, who lost no 'particle of . . . Mrs Gaskell (whose *Mary Barton* gave me emotions that required more and more consideration of the good which it must do)', bought a copy of this short story and wrote a note to the authoress about 'Jupiter'—a caged canary, introduced

in the first 'era'. Here is Mrs Gaskell's characteristic reply, hitherto unpublished:

Plymouth Grove,
*Sept.* 13 [1850].

I think that, if I were you and had felt as you say you did, "loth to make an objection" I should be glad to hear how thankfully my truth-speaking had been received; and so I write to you, just one little short note, to tell you that I value the kindness that will take the trouble and pains to point out errors or faults far more than any indiscriminate praise—I had almost said more than any praise at all; and I think that would have been the truth after all; for if I may ever hope to improve, and to make my standard high and higher still it must be by being a grateful listener to any one who will tell me where I am low or wrong. You make me *think;* I am not quite convinced that, as it is the custom here to keep birds, I might not, in trying to draw from the life introduce the circumstance; but yet I see the introduction without one word of disapproval seems to lend a sanction to the custom; so tell your grandchildren that I own I was wrong, and thank you both for your note and your fable. I saw the mention of the cause of your sorrow in the newspaper, and I was sorry for you.

Yours, with true respect,

Leigh Hunt, Esq.,[1] E. C. GASKELL.

How light the web that weaves our lives

[1] Unpublished letter in the Author's possession.

together! If the 'Scheherazade' of Dickens had never bought *Shirley*, would she have made the acquaintance of the parson's daughter of Haworth? She bought and read *Shirley*, and was impelled to write a note which brought tears to the eyes of Miss Brontë. Where is that letter now? We only know that it was written, and that in it she vowed to keep Charlotte Brontë's works as a treasure for her daughters. Beyond that we can but ask and ask. How did she feel the beauty of the book? Did she interpret its hidden passions? Was she interested in the story of the distressful times around the Luddite Agitation? Did she like the high autumnal etching-lights of *Jane Eyre* sobered to calm lucid insight?

> 'The letter you forwarded this morning', Charlotte writes to the reader in the firm of Smith & Elder, 'was from Mrs Gaskell, authoress of *Mary Barton*; she said I was not to answer it, but I cannot help doing so . . . she is a good, she is a great woman. Proud am I that I can touch a chord of sympathy in souls so noble. In Mrs Gaskell's nature it mournfully pleases me to fancy a remote affinity to my sister Emily.'

Charlotte was right; the keynotes of the hearts of Emily and Mrs Gaskell were similar. They

each wore *womanly* independence ; a chivalrous magic unknown to the feminist, who never says

> Nothing ever charms me more than when I meet my superior, one who makes me feel that he is my superior. . . . The higher above me, so much the better : it degrades to stoop : it is glorious to look up,

or

> I would scorn to contend for empire with him, I would scorn it. Shall my left hand dispute for precedence with my right? Shall my heart quarrel with my pulse? Shall my veins be jealous of the blood that fills them? [1]

as they would have said. And are there not hints of *Wuthering Heights* in *Sylvia's Lovers*? —an echo softened by the happiness of Mrs Gaskell.

It was on August 10, 1850, while Mrs Gaskell was visiting the lakes, that she became personally acquainted with Charlotte Brontë. Charlotte, 'chiefly to please papa', had accepted an invitation of Sir James and Lady Kay-Shuttleworth to visit them at a house they had taken near to Bowness. The baronet's wife, a Burnley

[1] *Shirley*, ch. xii.

girl, invited Mrs Gaskell to meet Miss Brontë.

In the drawing-room of their host's house they shook hands at once. The next morning they were even talking about the daring and purity of F. W. Newman's *Soul*, about his brother's lectures, and the *Seven Lamps* and *Modern Painters*. Perhaps Mrs Gaskell told the little lady that Ruskin gave drawing lessons to her daughters.

The meeting qualified the already high opinion that Miss Brontë had formed of the Manchester lady. Her genial temperament and beautiful character, her love of art and Mozart, her simplicity of attire, not barbaric, together making up an unassuming versatility which could not fail to recommend.

In the following June, Miss Brontë, who was staying in London for a few days, engaged herself to spend a week-end with Mrs Gaskell on her way home. This visit to Manchester 'formed a cheering break in the journey' although 'the weather was so intensely hot, and she herself so much fatigued with her London sight-seeing, that [they] did little but sit indoors with open windows and

talk'. Charlotte twice afterwards stayed with the Gaskells: at the close of April, 1853 and on May Day, 1854, the month before her marriage. These changes from barbarism to civilization (the contrast is Miss Brontë's) sunned her sombre life a little. She had a 'diffident admiration' for those venerable (!) little ladies Flossy, Julia, and Meta—Mrs Gaskell's daughters, to whom she afterwards sent her dear love. 'Julia', she writes, 'who has a great deal of her mama's nature (modified) in her, surreptitiously possessed herself of a minute fraction of my heart, which has been missing ever since I saw her.'

To the end of her days Charlotte carried on an affectionate correspondence with Mrs Gaskell, much of which is printed in the *Life*. From Mrs Gaskell's letters it is evident that she did her best to brighten Miss Brontë's life. Monckton Milnes, who had been touched by the little lady's fame and loneliness, joined hands in these endeavours. After she became Mrs Nicholls he suggested a pension from the State, but Mrs Gaskell thought it would give her more pleasure if bestowed upon her 'hard-working, self-denying' husband as

'acknowledgement of his merits as a good clergyman'.

Writing to her husband from Manchester, on September 13, 1851, Jane Welsh Carlyle says:

> Mrs Gaskell took Geraldine [Jewsbury] and me a beautiful drive the other day in a "friend's carriage". She is a very kind cheery woman in her own home; but there is an atmosphere of moral dulness about her, as all Socinian women.

An atmosphere of moral dulness about Mrs Mrs Gaskell! It was the acid atmosphere of Craigenputtock—that styptic to the salon-suited Mrs Carlyle—that prompted that phrase. *Liebchen* Jane continues:

> I am thinking whether it would not be expedient, however, to ask her to give you a bed when you come. She would be proud and happy I guess; and you do not wish to sleep at Geraldine's, besides that, mine is the only spare room furnished. The Gaskell house is very large in the midst of a shrubbery and quite near this.

There the records of the proposed visit end. Without more evidence it cannot be said that the 'domestic wandering Jew' stayed at Plymouth Grove. Froude is silent on the matter,

and Mr D. A. Wilson, whose new life of Carlyle is in progress, likewise bows and kindly reports[1] a remark of Espinasse who heard Carlyle praise 'Mrs Gaskell for having . . . discovered romance in the prosaic life of cotton-spinning Manchester', call Trollope's novels 'alum' and Jane Austen's 'dish-washings'.

Towards the Christmas of the Great Exhibition year of 1851, Mrs Gaskell had written the third of a series of sketches concerning elegant Amazons. Our thanks are due to Dickens, with his 'purest metal of praise', for the expansion of a limited design into an excellent performance garnered as *Cranford*.

By this time the reputation of the 'authoress of *Mary Barton*' was such that she had commanded Birkett Foster as an illustrator of *The Moorland Cottage*, a family tale written to order, though remarkable inasmuch as it is closely paralleled in George Eliot's *The Mill on the Floss*, written ten years later.

Everywhere she was lionized. Thackeray, with whom she was never quite comfortable, invited her to dinners. She tasted of

[1] In a letter to the author, Sept. 20, 1923.

the ease, warmth, and originality of his lectures on the English humorists and thought them delightful.

Mrs Gaskell did most of her writing in the autumn and winter months. The summer days she usually gave up to home and foreign holidays. In England, Silverdale—a restful village on the shore of Morecambe Bay where ' the distant horizon is soft and undulating in the moonlight '—was her favourite resort, and perhaps Keswick came second. Many of the sites and scenes in her novels are drawn from and enacted round about these hamlets. Abroad, France Italy and the Rhine Valley were her loves, and the novelist's deep and lasting interests in their scenery and architecture were further stimulated by friendships with literary and artistic residents and tourists.

Foremost among these friends was Madame Mohl, with whom she became acquainted in the early fifties during a visit to Paris with her daughter Marianne. It should be recorded here that Mrs Gaskell was usually accompanied on her travels by one or two of her daughters. Mary Clarke, an Englishwoman by birth and a

cosmopolitan by nature, married in 1857 Julius Mohl, an eminent German orientalist, professor of Persian in the *Collège de France*, and *bienfaisant*. As a girl she was educated at a convent school at Toulouse, and from 1831 to 1838 with her mother she occupied rooms adjoining those of Madame Récamier, with whom she became friendly, and helped to amuse Chateaubriand in his last years. Her *salon* at 120 Rue du Bac attracted a galaxy of talent; Quinet, Guizot, De Tocqueville, Thiers, Mignet, Thierry, Scherer, Ranke, Fauriel (whose *Chants populaires de la Grèce moderne* was afterwards reviewed by Mrs Gaskell), and Renan were some of her friends.

On the whole Madame Mohl enjoyed living and thought it signifies as much to be comfortable in the railway of life as at the journey's end. As a conversationalist she must have been brilliantly magnetic, since her personal appearance was unattractive. Her frizzled hair, like a poodle's, and short skirts contrasted greatly with our novelist's beauty and neatness. Ticknor, the American Spanish-student, describes Madame as ' full of good-natured kindness flavoured with a little sub-acid to give it a good

flavour'. The novelist has recorded in her own intimate and inimitable style some of her impressions of Parisian life and French society in three papers on *French Life*, and Madame Mohl peeps from under the rose in *Company Manners*.[1] One paragraph refers to her informal receptions. An early hour is fixed for opening the *salon*, when people are caught in their freshness.

> There is no preparation of entertainment; a few more lights, perhaps a Baba, or cake savouring strongly of rum, and a little more tea is provided. Everyone is welcome and no one is expected. The visitors may come dressed just as they would be at home; or in full toilette, on their way to balls and other gaieties. They go without any formal farewell; whence, I suppose, our expression "French leave".[2]

A faint murmur of old voices comes across the years. The *salon* is gradually filling with a brilliant assembly of authors, artists, ex-ministers' wives, and a few scandal-mongers, eagerly greeting Madame Mohl their hostess and arbiter

[1] *Company Manners* was founded upon an article on Madame de Sablé (1598-1678) by Victor Cousin, which appeared in the *Revue des deux mondes*.

[2] *French Life*, II.

of taste in mercuric voice and manner, and casting glances at Mrs Gaskell standing by the mantelpiece in characteristic way. Oh that it were possible for us to recede to one Mohl *ridotto!* If only to hear how Mrs. Gaskell enjoyed the wit and luminous conversation of Renan, to know how often she was lured by the confusions of the booksellers and the antique-dealers between the Rue du Bac and the Rue Guénégaud, and to listen to her recollections of Prosper Mérimée to whom she gave the blue-devils,[1] who disliked her '*air pleurer*', and liked her good looks.

After interrupting the course of our journey, let us retrace our footsteps to 1852. In the spring Mrs Gaskell was busily engaged on her second problem novel *Ruth*, and planning a third, *North and South*. *The Moorland Cottage* was selling well, the fourth edition of *Mary Barton* was nearly sold out, and their creator was full of life and work. Withal she attended to the feminine duties and she was proud of her good housekeeping. After all, literature was

[1] Anatole France, somewhere, calls him an unrepentant victim to *papillons noirs* who saw only virtue in energy and duty in passion.

the pleasure, not the business of her life. Notwithstanding her popularity she was unaffected and retained her quiet manners. Charles and Mary Cowden Clarke, who lunched with Mrs Gaskell at the Rev. Edward and Mrs Tagart's of Bayswater, in their reminiscences tell us that she 'blushed like a girl' when they hazarded an expression of admiration for her stories. They found her 'full of enthusiasm on general subjects of humanity and benevolence'. In a correspondence that afterwards passed between the Clarkes and the novelist

> on the subject of an act of truly valuable kindness she was performing anonymously for a young lady anxious to become a public singer, Mrs Gaskell showed herself to be actuated by the purest and noblest of motives in all she did. She tried her utmost to prevent her agency in the affair from being discovered; giving as her reason the dread that if it were known it might tend to "injure the freedom of the intercourse" between herself and the young lady in question; adding "for I want her to look upon me as a friend rather than as a benefactor".

About this time John Chapman, the physician, publisher, and bookseller, entertained as his 'central suns' Carlyle and Emerson. They

were joined by Froude and Mrs Gaskell. Mrs Lynn Linton, also present, was much impressed by the graciousness and feminine dignity of the story-teller :

> She was so sweet and yet so strong. . . . Her manner to me was perfect. I was a young beginner and she in the zenith of her fame ; but she neither crushed nor condescended—neither snubbed nor patronized. It was the fine manner of a woman to a girl—of a mistress to a neophyte ; and I have always loved and cherished her memory for the graciousness of her attitude and the kind words she spoke to me that evening.[1]

An August holiday at Keswick inspired *Cumberland Sheep Shearers*—a slender paper—rich in its observations of local customs and traditions. This sketch appeared in *Household Words* for January 22, 1853—about the hour when *Ruth*, that faint foreboding of *Tess*, was being handled by the reviewers.

During the rest of the year Mrs Gaskell was full of her usual exuberance for writing, social work, and society. She published a few short tales in the autumn and winter seasons, including the notable *Squire's Story*, and decided definitely

[1] *My Literary Life*, by E. Lynn Linton (1899), p. 93.

to write *North and South*. The latter part of the following letter, valuable as showing her method of work, is self-explanatory:

Tavistock House,
*February* 18, 1854.

My dear Mrs Gaskell,

I am sorry to say that I am not one of the Zoologicals, or I should have been delighted to have had a hand in the introduction of a child to the lions and tigers. But [W. H.] Wills shall send up to the Gardens this morning, and see if Mr Mitchell, the secretary, can be found. If he be producible I have no doubt that I can send you what you want in the course of the day.

Such has been the distraction of *my* mind in *my* story that I have twice forgotten to tell you how much I liked the Modern Greek Songs.[1] The article is printed and at press for the very next number that ever is.

Don't put yourself out at all as to the division of the story into parts; I think you had better write it in your own way. When we come to get a little of it into type, I have no doubt of being able to make such little suggestions as to breaks of chapters as will carry us over all that easily.

My dear Mrs Gaskell,
Always faithfully yours,
Charles Dickens.

[1] See *ante*, p. 38.

After a lapse of nearly two years Charlotte Brontë made her second visit to Plymouth Grove. On April 14, 1853, she writes :

> My dear Mrs Gaskell,
>
> Would it suit you if I were to come next Thursday, the 21st? . . . I should arrive by the train which reaches Manchester at 7 o'clock p.m. That, I think would be about your tea-time, and, of course, I should dine before leaving home. I always like evening for an arrival ; it seems more cosy and pleasant than coming in about the busy middle of the day. I think if I stay a week that will be a very long visit ; it will give you time to get well tired of me.[1]

Upon her arrival Charlotte, who expected to find the Gaskells alone, was somewhat upset by the presence of a young lady friend staying with them. In her *Life* the biographer refers to this ingrained nervousness in Miss Brontë, and gives some further reminiscences of the visit.

> ' One evening ', she says, ' we had among other guests, two sisters [2] who sang Scottish ballads exquisitely. Miss Brontë had been sitting quiet and constrained till they began " The Bonnie House of Airlie ",

[1] *The Brontës and their Circle* (Shorter), 1912, p. 14.

[2] The Miss Winkworths, afterwards of *Lyra Germanica* fame. See *ante*, p. 24.

but the effect of that and "Carlisle Yetts", which followed was as irresistible as the playing of the Piper of Hamelin. The beautiful clear light came into her eyes; her lips quivered with emotion; she forgot herself, rose and crossed the room to the piano, where she asked eagerly for song after song. The sisters begged her to come and see them the next morning, when they would sing as long as ever she liked; and she promised gladly and thankfully. But on reaching the house her courage failed. We walked sometime up and down the street; she upbraiding herself all the while for folly, and trying to dwell on the sweet echoes in her memory rather than on the thought of a third sister who would have to be faced if we went in. But it was of no use; and dreading lest this struggle with herself might bring on one of her trying headaches, I entered at last and made the best apology I could for her non-appearance.

One night I was on the point of relating some dismal ghost story, just before bedtime. She shrank from hearing it, and confessed that she was superstitious and prone at all times to the involuntary recurrence which might have been suggested to her.'[1]

Knowing of Charlotte's extreme sensitivity, the reader may wonder why Mrs Gaskell attempted to unravel an uncanny tale before her friend. Perhaps the future biographer thought that the effect of any story of hers must

[1] *Life of Charlotte Brontë*, 1857, vol. II, pp. 288-90.

appear light to one intimately acquainted with *Wüthering Heights*. If so, she forgot the dreadful association of ideas. It was more likely to be a spontaneous outburst of that love of the supernatural which is evinced by her enjoyment in describing it on every possible occasion.

Miss Brontë returned to Haworth on Tuesday the 26th of April, after exacting a promise of a return visit from her hostess. Mrs Gaskell, who had arranged to spend a few weeks in London, said that she would pay her visit in June. Early in that month Charlotte, who had been anticipating her visitor ever since she was at Plymouth Grove, wrote a note beginning 'June is come and I want to know if you can come on Thursday, the 9th inst.' Mrs. Gaskell, who was still in town, replied and fixed a day for the visit, but soon afterwards a letter came from Mr Brontë saying that his daughter

> was suffering from so severe an attack of influenza . . . that he must request me to defer my visit until she was better. While sorry for the cause, I did not regret that my going was delayed till the season when the moors would be all glorious with the purple bloom of the heather.[1]

[1] *Life of Charlotte Brontë*, 1857, vol. II, p. 294.

So the novelist's visit was deferred until the end of September.

We have no history of Mrs Gaskell's experiences in London at this time. Her impressions, doubtless like the surviving word-pictures of Haworth, would be worth having. They were made *and* lost or withheld. Where is that letter 'very like a page of *Cranford*' and containing an account of Mrs H. B. Stowe 'stimulatingly interesting', mentioned by Charlotte Brontë in July? Instead there is one crumb[1] telling us that she attended a service at St Paul's, accompanied by Mrs Stowe, Mrs Jameson, Mrs Milman (wife of the Dean), and possibly Thackeray. Anyhow, he was at the Deanery, where they lunched after the service, and very cheerful and in high spirits about his visit to America.

With surprising rapidity the summer passed like a dream—a Continental dream with her husband and two eldest girls; a delightful visit to Madame Salis Swabe, in Paris. In the same season a young Civil Servant, unknown to Mrs Gaskell and unknowing, began to write

[1] In *Sunny Memories*, by H. B. Stowe (1854), vol. II, p. 138.

*The Warden* and was soon afterwards despatched to survey the postal arrangements of Ulster. Seven years later their writings appeared side by side in the *Cornhill.*

The long-deferred visit to Haworth was fulfilled at the end of September. The Manchester novelist arrived at Keighley on a dull drizzly day. At the railway station she mounted the conveyance awaiting her, and during the four up-hill miles to the Brontë's house she pondered o'er

> ' The spirit which bent 'neath the power of the moors.'

From the onset of this holiday Mrs Gaskell was very happy. Charlotte and she were full of interest in each other's subjects and as Mrs Gaskell afterwards admitted, the four days passed too quickly; they had so much to say and hear.[1]

The two novelists breakfasted at nine o'clock, walked out from midday to dinner-time at two o'clock, rested after dinner till four, when they

[1] Mrs Gaskell wrote two accounts of this visit; one letter to a friend she afterwards printed in her life of Miss Brontë, the other—a franker and fuller account—she posted to John Forster the journalist and biographer. The MS. of the latter description is owned by Messrs Maggs Bros., the *rara avis* booksellers.

went out again till six o'clock teatime. Mrs Gaskell saw little of Mr Brontë. After breakfast he disappeared. Once or twice she saw him glare and snap at his daughter, and that was enough to make Mrs Gaskell know her man. To his distinguished visitor he was polite and lavish with elaborate compliments.

We catch the atmosphere of the two friends' conversations in the *Life*. On one occasion Miss Brontë observed that in her opinion some persons were appointed beforehand to sorrow and disappointment; that joy did not fall to the lot of all; that those who were doomed to rough paths should try to moderate their expectations and cultivate the virtues of patience and resignation. Mrs Gaskell took a different view. She thought that to some people joy and misery came in strong patches of light and shadow, while in the lives of others they were equally blended.

Their funds of talk were inexhaustible, and on the way of parting Mrs Gaskell felt that their conversations might be extended in any direction without getting to the end of any subject.

They parted with many intentions of renewing

the pleasure they had had together. They agreed to alternate visits when one wanted quiet or the other bustle. There was one alternation—Charlotte Brontë visited Manchester in the following May,[1] nine months afterwards she was of the eternal quiet in Haworth Churchyard.

In the spring of 1854 Mrs Gaskell was once again viewing the realities of London life. A few more dinners, a few more litterateurs and talks about Turkey and the unheeded ultimatum to Russia and its consequences were her chief affairs. She renewed an acquaintanceship with Henry F. Chorley, a critic on the staff of the *Athenæum* who had reviewed *Cranford*. He told her of his sister's declining health, and afterwards until her death Mrs Gaskell cheered her with letters. 'Don't speak of gratitude', she wrote to Chorley at the end of the year, 'don't speak of gratitude. I *love* Miss Chorley, and am only too glad to do anything that may give her a moment's pleasure, only I am afraid my letters must be dull.'[2]

[1] See *ante*, p. 44. [2] See vol. II (p. 254) of *H. F. Chorley's Autobiography, Memoir and Letters*, compiled by H. G. Hewlett. 2 vols., 1873.

It was in this year that *Libbie Marsh* appeared in a foreign dress. This was the first of the novelist's tales to be done into a foreign tongue. There is extant a note of Madame Mohl, dated November, 1855, relating to a translation of *Cranford*. Possibly she it was who arranged the translations of Mrs. Gaskell's other books. No fewer than eight of her stories were translated into French and five into German during her lifetime.

We must pause for a moment on *North and South*. This appeared in the weekly numbers of *Household Words*, between September, 1854, and January, 1855. Soon afterwards Chapman & Hall published it in two volumes. In the preface to the first edition the authoress apologized for the 'rude makyng' of the book—her first experiment at piecemeal work. In spite of this 'bit by bit' handicap and the limitations imposed by the requirements of Dickens as editor of *Household Words*, by a few excisions and additions Mrs Gaskell perfected the construction of her book to a degree well-nigh faultless.

The appearance of *North and South* marks an important change in the direction of Mrs

Gaskell's work. Henceforth she ceased to be a social novelist and became a novelist of society. Probably she realized that the story-teller in her naturally got the upper hand of the preacher. Certain it is that she wisely, consciously or unconsciously, let the preacher bow. Henceforth she exerts her power in drawing attractive characters in diverse scenes. As her interests become more varied and as the scenes in which she moves become more changeable, so her stage-craft is finer and her powers of observation keener. The details of her protean life are woven into her books. That is why it is good to know that her curiosity had taken her to see Florence Nightingale; that she had visited Oxford, where she had been entertained by Max Müller and Goldwin Smith, then young men in their thirties. She had danced in the Hall of Christ Church until four in the morning and sat out and told tales, 'none of which are bad enough to be good'. She was introduced to a Dr Gibson and two young fellows of Trinity, Cambridge, took tea with Mr Blunt at Chelsea Rectory, formed a friendship with Lady Amherst, daughter of the last

Duke of Dorset, stayed at the Lord Hatherton's seat at Teddesley Park, Staffordshire, and charmed Frederica Bremer, the Danish novelist, with the sun-bright expression of her countenance.

The death of Charlotte Brontë (Nicholls) on March 31, 1855, was followed by noxious rumours concerning 'Jane Eyre'. Ellen Nussey, Charlotte's oldest friend, drew Mr Nicholl's attention to these falsehoods, and suggested that Mrs Gaskell would be a suitable person to undertake a reply. Mr Nicholls was of the opinion that such detractions should be ignored, and he found anything in the nature of a biography inconsonant with his feelings. His wife's father, however, was of a different opinion, and in the end Mr Nicholls did not think it right to oppose Mr Brontë's wishes. The original suggestion of an 'authentic statement' developed into a proposed biography, and Mrs Gaskell was invited to Haworth Parsonage forthwith (in July). After much consideration she undertook the *Life*, although from the beginning she felt the difficulties of the task. We may

be sure that it was not without some misgiving that she consented to paint a picture in which oddity, eccentricity, and gloom figured largely as pigments.

'Come what may', Mrs Gaskell determined that her book should be thorough. She questioned and cross-questioned all Charlotte's surviving friends and acquaintances, and borrowed her letters to them; she visited nearly every scene which formed part of the background to her friend's life in addition to those scenes depicted in her friend's writings. Like her favourite Figaro, she was here, there, and everywhere. Brussels was not omitted from these Brontë peregrinations; she became acquainted with M. Héger at the famous *pensionnat*. Curiously enough, his wife refused to see the English lady. The greater part of chapter XI of the *Life* is founded upon this visit.

With all this seemingly incessant business, Mrs Gaskell managed to carry on her usual activities in other spheres, and the circle of her acquaintances increased. Henry Greville, one-time attaché to the Embassy at Paris, was the latest addition, in October, 1856. On 20th

October he invited Mr and Mrs Gaskell to dine with him, and he discovered that the novelist was ' remarkably pleasing, unaffected, and easy in her manners, with a melodious voice in speaking '.[1]

Hitherto Chapman & Hall had been Mrs Gaskell's publishers. During her lifetime Charlotte Brontë had wished her friend to publish under the imprint of Smith & Elder, but earlier arrangements blocked the way, and Charlotte's wish was not fulfilled till she was in the grave.

With the biography in view, the novelist's acquaintanceship with Mr George Smith and his family increased. Mr Smith, whose firm had published all Charlotte's work, naturally wished to produce the *Life*, and now that the pathway was clear Mrs Gaskell was only too happy to respect the wishes of her dead friend and of her future publisher.

After the *Life of Charlotte Brontë* had been written and matters concerning its publication completed, the biographer escaped the reviewers by making a journey to Rome with two of her daughters and Catherine Winkworth. They went by way of Paris (visiting

[1] *Leaves from a Diary*, 1856, vol. II, pp. 392-3.

Madame Mohl *en route*) and Marseilles, thence voyaging to Civita Vecchia. The duration of their journey was lengthened by a boiler accident on the steamer. Mrs Gaskell afterwards made use of this experience in *A Dark Night's Work* (ch. XIII), where she describes the mishap as though it occurred near to Civita Vecchia; actually it happened outside Marseilles.

The novelist loved the sea, and the blood of her Norse ancestors reglowed whenever she saw it. Of this voyage she recollects the vessel

> Just passing the rocky coast of Elba, and the sky was flushed with rosy light, that made the shadows on the island of the most exquisite purple. The sea still heaved with yesterday's storm, but the motion only added to the beauty of the sparkles and white foam that dimpled and curled on the blue waters.

The nine days' journey in twelve completed, the four travellers after many vexatious baggage examinations, minus many *pauls*, and besettings with *facchini* (in both senses!) proceeded from Civita to Rome by the newly constructed road past the three post stations of Santa Severa, Palo, and Castel di Guido.

Once in Rome, like her own 'Ellinor', she

found 'everything new and strange a picture and a delight, a Roman with his cloak draped over his shoulder, a girl going to market or carrying her pitcher back from the fountain, everything and every person that presented it or himself to her senses, gave them a delicious shock, as if it were something strangely familiar from Pinelli, but unseen by her mortal eyes before'. Like Gibbon, she sat musing amidst the ruins of the Capitol, and like her own Lady Ludlow she went into the fields within the ancient walls and picked up the bits of marble that were once tesselated floors. The stately *contadini* reminded her of the senators who received Brennus and his Gauls, and she revelled in the noise and confusion of the carnival with its wild crowds and riff-raff and masks, and showers of flowers and confetti. . . .

> 'It was in those charming Roman days', she wrote to her friend William Wetmore Story, the American sculptor, 'that my life, at any rate, culminated. I shall never be so happy again. I don't think I was ever so happy before. My eyes fill with tears when I think of those days'.[1]

[1] *W. W. Story and his Friends*, by H. James (1903), vol. I, p. 352.

As Henry James says, 'she read poetry into almost any friendship'.

Mrs Gaskell and her daughters stayed under the immediate wing of the Storys at the Casa Cabrale. At their house she formed a lasting friendship with Charles Eliot Norton, the American critic. In a letter to one of Norton's daughters, 'Meta' (Margaret Emily) Gaskell, has described the meeting:

> We reached Rome late at night on February 23, and drove through the dark strange streets to the Casa Cabrale, where the Storys were living, who had so kindly invited us [to visit them]. Next morning it was all brilliant sunshine and colour and wild gaiety. We were taken down by the Storys to a balcony in the Corso, from which we were to see the great day of the Carnival—Shrove Tuesday. The narrow street was filled with a boisterous crowd of Romans half mad with excitement at the confetti-throwing and horse-racing. Suddenly against the turbulent background there stood out the figure of a young man just below the balcony, smiling up at my mother, whom he knew he was to see there, and whom he easily distinguished from the others. . . . He was brought up on to the balcony, but how little he and my mother thought, as they greeted one another, that until her death they were to be most true and intimate friends.

Norton never tired of the novelist's sweetness of voice and animation of expression. About this time he writes: 'She is a wonderful story-teller, never exaggerating and always dramatic'; again, in a note to A. H. Clough, the poet:

> the pleasantest incident of the winter to me has been the becoming acquainted with Mrs Gaskell, who has been staying here for the last month. She is a very charming person, with all the qualities of heart that are best—such a person as her *Cranford* and the best things in her other books would lead one to hope and expect should be. But you know her . . .

To James Russell Lowell he sent a similar sketch:

> I learned every day to feel towards her a deeper affection and respect. She is like the best things in her books; full of generous and tender sympathies, of thoughtful kindness, of pleasant humour, of quick appreciation, of utmost simplicity and truthfulness, and uniting with peculiar delicacy and retirement, a strength of principle and purpose and straightforwardness, such as few women possess.

Norton visited the Brownings with Mrs Gaskell, and after the pleasant Roman days he accompanied her party to Florence and Venice. One

day when they were travelling and talking about books, Mrs Gaskell said that if she were confined to a desert island and had to choose one book by a living author, she would have *Modern Painters*.

It was in Venice, on June 20, 1857, that Mrs Gaskell first saw her *Life of Charlotte Brontë* (in print)—a Tauchnitz reprint. She bought a copy, gave it to Norton, and was eager that he should read it at once, that they might talk about it. His contemporary judgment, given to Lowell, is interesting: 'It is a book that will be read with tears, and make those who read it better and stronger, and readier to bear the trials of life—a hundred years hence, as it is read now'.

In Venice the Gaskells left Norton and travelled homeward by Milan, Genoa, and Nice. The critic parted with a promise that he would stay with them in Manchester in July, when Mrs Gaskell acted as his *valet de place* at the "Art Treasures Exhibition".

The novelist is no sooner back in Cottonopolis than a friend enlists her services on his behalf. This is the Rev. Henry Green, who is writing

a history of Knutsford. To James Crossley she writes :

> A friend of mine is amplifying some lectures he delivered at Knutsford during this last winter on the history of that dear little town, and a circle of country about 20 miles round. He has discovered very curious family traditions, and old facts ; and he wants to make his book as perfect as possible, and I would gladly do what I can to help him, remembering what Southey says of how good and well it would be if every parish priest would write down what he hears and learns about his own Parish, as traits of customs and character might thus be preserved as *Memoires pour servir.*[1]

In his *History*, Mr Green told the ' true history of Higgins ' the highwayman, whose exploits Mrs Gaskell narrates in *The Squire's Story*.

Elsewhere it has been explained that the tale-teller usually spent the summer months on holidays. She was not physically strong ; and the drizzly atmosphere of Manchester, much as she loved it from old associations, did not suit her, and it became requisite that she should make frequent excursions to the continent, the south coast, and the shores of More-

[1] From an unpublished letter dated May 13 ( ? 1858) in the Manchester Reference Library.

cambe Bay. The end of July and part of August she and her daughters spent at Lindeth Tower, Silverdale.[1] The plain square tower, four storeys high, is the most striking feature of the village, and it was in the sitting-room on the top floor and on the crenelated roof that Mrs Gaskell conceived many of her tales. Against the insidious troubles of a weak heart and the weariness of society lionizing, the Lancashire village afforded a welcome refuge. There she could write in peace, and discuss her family affairs unhindered by innumerable visitors.

About this time her second daughter, Meta, engaged herself to one Captain Hill. The engagement was broken off a year later, and a visit to Heidelberg was made upon Mr Gaskell's suggestion that a change of air and scene would be good for her.[2]

One hey-day of Meta's apparent bliss was spent at Chatsworth, the seat of the Duke of Devonshire. Thither daughter and mother went on an afternoon visit. To their amazement they were invited to stay for a day or two. 'But we have no clothes', protested Mrs Gaskell.

[1] Private information. [2] Private information.

'Fiddle to clothes', said His Grace, and so the matter ended. They enjoyed the Palace, the Duke in his bath-chair, Sir Joseph Paxton —the designer of the Crystal Palace, and other guests.

Meta's love affair concluded, her mother raised £100 for the tour in Rhineland by the sale of *Round the Sofa*; a hexameron of contributions to periodical literature threaded together by the ancient 'link' device.

Just before making the visit to Germany—a long holiday of thirteen weeks, Mrs Gaskell stayed at Glasgow [1] and the neighbouring health resort of Dunoon, where she met her half-sister Catherine, whom she had not seen since 1834. The present writer has been unable to gain a clear account of this trip, and he finds it well-nigh impossible to say anything in the way of actual narrative concerning the Rhine excursion. On the journey up the river Mrs Gaskell was accompanied by her husband and daughters Meta and Florence. Mr Gaskell returned to England after a short stay in the

[1] She dates letters from '286, Bath Crescent, Glasgow.'

old Palatinate seat, leaving his wife and children to linger on until they were tired of Germany.

What did the novelist think of the succession of splendid landscapes, of her new friends, the picturesque peasants, the music? We can but ask, and imagine a tome of gorgeous gossip.

The Gaskells lodged at 94, Hausst-strasse in Heidelberg, and were soon happy in their new surroundings. Mrs Gaskell's fame had preceded her presence; in the previous year *Cranford* had been translated into German and published at Leipzig in the 'Universal-Bibliothek'. Accordingly, it is not surprising to know that a Mme Schlosser gave a ball '*zu Ehren des Herrn und Frau Gaskell*'.

The visit inspired at least two of the novelist's short stories, *The Grey Woman* and *Six Weeks at Heppenheim*. In connection with the latter tale, it is interesting to note that she knew a girl named Thekla.

But her thoughts are not entirely in Germany and at Christmastide she reminds a relative who is housekeeping for her in England to send pieces of beef to six poor persons, and to add

one or two names if she knew of anyone who wanted a Christmas dinner.

On their way back from Heidelberg in January, 1859, Mrs Gaskell and her daughters stayed for a few days with Mme Mohl. The journey to Paris was made through Flanders, wherein they halted at Antwerp, Ghent, and Bruges, towns whose sublime beauty and practical poetry the novelist loved.

It was at Whitby during her next summer holiday that she began to write *Sylvia's Lovers* —the dearest of her literary children. She lodged at a house—1, Abbey Terrace—belonging to people named Rose. The Roses were well versed in the history of their native town, and it is recorded that Mrs Gaskell was often closeted with them during her stay in the old abbey town. Another factor, too, kindled the fire of her imagination: the broad expanse of sea which her rooms commanded conjured up the old sea-blood in her veins. She delivered herself to the wistful charms of the

'ceaseless waves lapping the shelving shore'

(in her poetic line) of the old town, and allowed

them to penetrate her intimately. She invoked the spirit of the late eighteenth century, loosed herself from the hand of Dickens—which, truly, never weighed heavily upon her—dropped the sentimental sobbings of *Ruth*, and assumed a chastened and restrained manner something like that which Thackeray achieved in *Esmond*. Indeed, *Sylvia's Lovers* is *her Esmond*, her greatest effort, and her saddest and most powerful book.

Many of us have thought that we would give all we have to see one single day as it was a hundred years ago, to feel in tune with one brain and heart, to bring back one bright spring morning, one summer's day, or one dark winter's night. In contemplative moods like these must we sit in judgment of books like *Sylvia's Lovers*.

Upon its appearance in 1863 the *Saturday Review* thought that its authoress had fallen below her own standard, and generally misjudged the book. In spite of this and similar critiques, the novel refused to be a still-born child. A second edition, illustrated by George Du Maurier, was soon required, and Mrs Gaskell was consoled by the recollection that ten years

earlier the authoress of *Romola* had called *Esmond* an uncomfortable book.

By the time that Mudie's were circulating the Yorkshire tale, its creator had brought forth a few more flowers of her mind; sketches and short stories, including that choicest flower of all *Cousin Phillis*, a contribution to the *Cornhill Magazine*, which we unconsciously place on the book-shelf beside *Under the Greenwood Tree*.

In February, 1860, she visited Oxford again and made friends with Augustus Hare, nephew of the Archdeacon of Lewes. He was much impressed by her kindness, and he noted how deferent and courteous she was—even to her own daughters. In *The Story of My Life*, Hare writes: 'While she was at Oxford, the subject of ghosts was brought forward for a debate at the Union; she wished to have spoken from the gallery, and if she had, would probably have carried the motion in favour of ghosts at once'. The novelist's interest in psychical matters has been referred to above.[1] Like young Mamillius in *The Winter's Tale*, she

[1] See *ante*, p. 45.

loved churchyard stories and liked to fright listeners with her sprites. But, as with Sir Walter Scott, her sense of superstition soothed her imagination without influencing her reason and conduct.

Five months later (July) we find the novelist with her two younger daughters, Flossy and Julia, at Kreuznach near Mainz.

About the middle of December in the following year, Mr and Mrs Gaskell and Meta went 'up to town' for a few days. It is reasonable to suppose that they shared the general interest in the death of the Prince Consort, and it is likely that they visited or even lodged with the novelist's cousin, Sir Henry Holland, at 25, Brook Street. Sir Henry was physician in ordinary to the Prince, and he it was who issued the famous bulletin of the 11th December: '*Hitherto* no unfavourable symptoms', from which the Queen deleted the 'Hitherto'. On Monday the 23rd, the Gaskells walked to and from St Paul's after a fruitless attempt to hear a funeral sermon on the dead Prince.[1]

Whilst in the metropolis they availed them-

[1] Private information.

selves of the opportunity of visiting their old friend, James Nasmyth, the distinguished engineer. He had established himself in a beautiful house at Penshurst in Kent. He was part of the 'composition' that went to make up Paul Manning's father in *Cousin Phillis*, and Thornton in *North and South*.

In her papers on *French Life*, Mrs Gaskell has left us what may be termed a tactful diary of her experiences in France from the end of February to May 14, 1862, and from February 16, to March 17, 1863. The earlier excursion was made ostensibly as a holiday with Meta and Isabel Thomson; in reality it combined a change of air with some research work on Madame de Sévigné, whose life Mrs Gaskell purposed to write. But she died before her essay was fulfilled.

After a nine weeks' stay with Madame Mohl in Paris, the three ladies made a tour in Normandy and Brittany. At Chartres, on May 10th, the diarist wrote:

> We are quite worn out with the ever-increasing noise of Paris; or, perhaps, I should rather say, as the heat became greater, so our necessity for open

windows by day and by night increased; and the masons opposite rose to their work with the early morning light. So we determined to go off to Brittany for our few remaining days, having a sort of happy mixture of the ideas of sea, heath, rocks, ferns, and Madame de Sévigné in our heads. The one and first destined point in our plans was to see the cathedral at Chartres.

After their arrival in the old provincial town, in the midst of a fair which shattered Mrs Gaskell's hopes of 'a quiet night', Meta and Isabel went out to take a twilight view of the cathedral augmented by the distant strains of the overture to *Guillaume Tell*. Mrs Gaskell was content to see its beauties in the freshness of the next morning. She stayed in the hotel for the evening and arranged a meal for the young ladies, and talked to Madame who pretended to be disgusted at the improper conduct of the young ladies in walking about the town so late on a *jour de fête*. It was evident, she said, that they did not know what was *comme il faut*, and there was no knowing when, if ever, they would return.

Two days later, on May 12, 1862, they were at Vitre 'welcomed by noise and advice'. They

lodged at a hotel once occupied by Madame de Sévigné, and somehow Mrs Gaskell expected to see 'a fair, plump lady, in hanging sleeves and long light brown ringlets, walking before me wherever I went, half turning her pretty profile over her white shoulder to say something bright and playful'; and instead they followed their spruce landlord into the bedrooms at the end of a corridor, and coolly ordered their dinner.

On the 13th, the three ladies went in a kind of market cart to see Madame de Sévigné's château—*Les Rochers*. It was a bright dewy morning and they had a merry time in their jolting, rattling carriage, 'the fourth place occupied by sketch-books and drawing materials'. They alighted on the narrow side of an oblong of grass in full sight of the château 'with *tourelles* and towers, and bits of high roof', and there Meta made a preliminary sketch for a delightful water-colour drawing.

> Our plan was to sketch first, and then try to see the house. . . . At last an old man in a blue blouse came out from the group [of farm servants] near the barn-door, and slowly approaching, sat himself down

on a hillock near. Of course we began to talk, seeing his sociable intentions.

He told them of his noble ancestors who had taken the wrong side in the wars, and there was he obliged to work for his daily bread. 'We sighed out of sympathy with his sighs, and amplified the text, "Sic transit", etc. Then he offered up a pinch of snuff, which we took, and sneezed accordingly, and this afforded our old friend much amusement.'

'*May 14th:* We have decided to return to England to see the Exhibition. We are going by Fougères, Pontorson, Mont St Michel, Avranches, Caen, and Rouen; and by that time shall have made an agreeable "loop" of a little journey full of objects of interest.'

What a change from the *fêtes* of Normandy, from *les filles*, *les prêtres*, *les pigeons* to the grand festival—the Universal Exhibition! Well, perhaps one of the ladies said, '*Ce n'est pas tous les jours fête*', and then all three decided to view

'All of beauty, all of use
That one fair planet can produce,'

as Tennyson chanted to the World's Fair.

The novelist soon wearied of this mockery of fortune. At home a school of adversity awaited her; one of those many ironic comments which act as periods to the prosperous age of Victoria. The Civil War, which temporarily sundered the United States, soon affected the exportation of raw cotton to England, and eventually brought about the Lancashire famine of 'Sixty-two and Sixty-three'. Fortunately in the two previous years trade had been favourable, and there was little ill-feeling between 'hands' and masters, and although the men owed their bread to the Federalists yet they humanely starved for the North. They adhered to the cause which they believed to be that of the right and free. Their views were those of Norton when he wrote to the Gaskells:

> We mean to save the Union and to establish the Government of the United States over the whole country—we mean to do this for the sake of Liberty and of civilization, and in doing it the slavery of the black race in America will come to an end.

A great charity-fund committee was formed, and under its able administration about £2,000,000 was wisely distributed. Mrs Gaskell

was one of the most active members of the Central Relief Committee, in Manchester.[1] She was no mere soup and blanket charity visitor; she was a friend who mingled her mind with the sufferers. She never forgot that 'the poor have hearts as well as stomachs'. Sir Adolphus Ward says that 'her name had so good a sound among the Lancashire working-classes that we hear of an Oldham man regularly bringing his children to gaze upon the house in Plymouth Grove where dwelt the authoress'. Indeed, she worked so hard that her health broke down under the strain, and she was forced to retire to Eastbourne.

From the Sussex watering-place she writes to her publisher, George Smith, in October, 1862:

> I wish 'North and South' would make friends, and let us have cotton, and then our poor people would get work, and then you should have as many novels as you liked to take, and we should not be killed with 'Poor on the Brain', as I expect we shall before the winter is over. We were really glad before leaving home to check each other in talking of the one absorbing topic, which was literally haunting us in our sleep, as well as being the first thoughts in wakening and the last at night.

[1] See also *ante*, p. 17.

It was during this rest cure that the novelist made notes for her grim little story, *Crowley Castle*. At the opening of the tale she says: 'We drove from the little sea-bathing place in Sussex to see the massive ruins of Crowley Castle, which is the show excursion of Merton'. The picture of 'Crowley' appears to be founded on Pevensey Castle, and perhaps the Earl of Morton of the drama of the Norton Conquest suggested 'Merton'.

The months hastened away, and the finger of time laid gentle hold on Mrs Gaskell and greyed a few of her hairs. In figure she was now the stately matron of the drawing by Samuel Lawrence. At heart she was still the gracious lady of whom Sir Robert Morier, the diplomatist, said 'not one speck of dust soils her *weibheit*'.

For eight or nine years she had been troubled with headaches and sickness. She was up-borne solely by her indomitable will. Incessant changes of scenery became almost necessary to satisfy the cravings of her varied mind. These changes she felt must be punctuated with periods of quiet. The refrain to this yearn-

ing for peace was 'O for a house in the country', and to this end she became occupied with a scheme. She would write a long novel, and from its proceeds she would buy a country home. Furthermore, it should be a secret from her husband and to him a great surprise.

On January 23, 1863, a young man named Arthur Sullivan, aged twenty-one, was at Greenheys, Manchester. He was taken to a ball there and shown about 'like a stuffed gorilla'. He walked languidly through the lancers 'and then talked a good deal to Mrs Gaskell, the authoress'. On the following day he conducted his *Music to the Tempest*. The future partner of Gilbert was not the first young man to be smitten with Mrs Gaskell, and next year a young poet was captivated by her charms.

Before winter's wrack ended, she was again on the Continent, accompanied by her daughters, Meta, Florence, and Julia. They broke their journey to Rome at Paris, where they stayed with Madame Mohl, and Avignon.

'Again in Paris!' (she wrote on February 16). Then follows a talk on the varying agreeableness of French informal receptions, and a chronicle

of one especially delightful evening given by Madame de Circourt, in whose house 'the weak and dull and humble got such kind and unobtrusive attention', and where 'learning and genius and worth' were truly appreciated and sure of being understood. At Madame de Circourt's she met

> the present lady of Les Rochers, whose ancient manor house we had visited in Brittany the year before. Instead of a Parisian drawing-room, full of scented air, brilliant with light, through which the gay company of high-born revellers had just passed, the bluff of land overlooking the Bocage rose before me; the short sweet turf on which we lay fragrant with delicate flowers; the grey turretted manor-house, with here and there a faint splash of colour on the lichen-tinted walls; the pigeons wheeling in the air above the high dove-cot; the country servants in their loosely fitting, much belaced liveries; and old De la Roux in his blouse, shambling around us, with his horn snuff-box and story of ancestral grandeur.
>
> March 5th, Avignon: . . . We came straight on here and are spending a few days in this charming inn [Hôtel de l'Europe]; the *mistral* howling and whistling without. . . . But inside we are in a lofty *salon* looking into the picturesque inn-yard, sheltered by a folding screen from the knife-like draught of the door; a fire heaped up with blazing

logs, resting on brass and irons ; skins of wild beasts making the floor soft and warm for our feet ; old military plans, and bird's-eye views of Avignon, as it was two hundred years ago ; . . . Eugénie de Guérin to read ; and we do not care for the *mistral*, and we are well content to be in our present quarters for a few days.

March 8th : It was all very well to huddle ourselves up in indoor's comfort for a day or two ; but, after that, we longed to go out in spite of the terrible *mistral*. . . . So on the day but one after our arrival here, we happed and wrapped ourselves up tightly and well, and sailed out of the courtyard. We were taken and seized in a moment by the tyrant ; all we could do was to shut our eyes, and keep our ground, and wonder where our petticoats were. . . . With slow perseverance we made our way from point to point, and at length came to a corner in the massive walls [of the Palace of the Popes] where we could rest and look about us. Up above our heads rose the enormous walls—the far extending shadow of Rome. . . .

We went into the cathedral, and the calm atmosphere was so soothing and delightful, that we were inclined to stop there till the *mistral* had ceased blowing ; but, as that might not be for a month or six weeks, on second thoughts we believed it would be better to return to our hotel. . . .

March 12 : . . . We are very content to be in the house to-day ; the wind is blowing worse than ever. . . . We are learning how to manage wooden

fires. [The old Polish man who waits upon us] gave us a little lesson yesterday.

The old man was an exile who had been at service in the hotel for thirty years. He liked talking to the four ladies who found his language difficult to understand, although they were quite at ease when talking in 'the soft satiny patois of the South of France'.

'March 16: Though the *mistral* has but little abated, we went across to Ville-Neuve this morning.' Their visit to the old town was prompted by their hostess's topographical books aided by the report of a seventeenth-century murder trial, that of Madame de Grange. Her portrait, it appears, was to be found in a convent at Ville-Neuve. The high-blowing wind had driven the inhabitants of the town indoors, the winding streets were deserted, and the party tried several gateways before they hit upon the nunnery in which was Madame's portrait by Pierre Mignard; the picture of 'a sweet, happy, young woman, innocently glad in her possession of rare beauty'.

'March 17: A telegram from Marseilles.

A boat starts to-day for Civita Vecchia'; so the diarist ends. It is regrettable that she did not keep a complete journal of one grand tour.

Her observations on the shades of difference in character and accent in divers peoples would have been interesting. The present writer believes that the remainder of this holiday was spent in Rome, at 43, Via Sant Isidoro, and at Florence, where Mrs Gaskell witnessed a performance of *Lucia di Lammermoor*. This much-criticized opera was favoured by our grandparents, though we may be sure that the novelist, as a lover of Beethoven and Mozart, would not fail to criticize Donizetti. It is fairly safe to assume that she was impressed by the *ensemble* of guests in the ancient hall of Ravenswood (Act II), and the expressive air of *Lucia:*

Regnava nel silenzio.

On March the 9th, 1864, we find Mrs Gaskell aiding a young man who wished to gain an insight into the engineering business. That she knew the haunts of mechanical materials

and operations and something of their nature and properties, the following letter will show. It is valuable, too, as an unconscious unfolding of how she penetrated into the characters of masters and men and their pursuits, which is one of the elements of her early success as a novelist. This missive, hitherto unprinted and unnoticed, is worth preserving if only as supplementary evidence of her varied interests, her instinctive dislike of stupid *fine* persons, and her innate kindliness and delicacy of feeling. She writes, from 89, Oxford Terrace, Hyde Park :

Dear Sir,

Will you allow me to write to you in the first person, as it will be easier to me to say what I want in that manner? I enclose two letters for you to deliver in Manchester. I only wish I had been at home there to do anything in my power for a nephew of my dear friend Madame Mohl. Our house is 46 *Plymouth Grove,* and if you will call there, and ask for my daughter Miss Gaskell, she will, I am sure, do anything in her power, which is pretty great, to forward any views you may entertain after your arrival in Manchester. Of course she may be from home ; at any rate you will please call at the above address and ask for a letter, which will be sent there for you, of Introduction to a Mr

Byers—" Byers & Peacock " is the firm,—which will, I hope, be given in such terms as to be more than a mere common introduction. Mr Byers is a German ; a very benevolent, eccentric old bachelor ; but the head of engineering works, which now hold the first place in Manchester.

You must know Mr Fairbairn well by reputation. He has withdrawn from any active share in business, but it is something to see him and get his advice. He is often from home, but it is worth trying often to see him. The other note is to a connexion of ours, a boy of eighteen or so,—son of Judge Crompton, who has lately come, as an articled apprentice I believe, to Peacock & Byers. His father took counsel with most of the principal engineers of the country and followed their advice in sending him for a year, at least, to these works. He will give you his opinion of the work he has to go through in a very sensible way, I am sure. He is at home every *evening* (except Wednesdays & Fridays) and at work all day.

I also enclose some of my cards. If you have time they will enable you to see the things best worth [seeing] in Manchester, viz : " *Murray's* " FINE spinning-mills in Union St. (I think) just off Ancoats Lane. Everybody there knows " Murray's ". You would there see the whole process of preparing and spinning cotton, with the *latest* improvements in the machinery required ; the more questions you ask the better they will be pleased, as they will evince interest.

" *Hoyles* " print works, Buxton St [Ardwick] off the London Road,—may be taken in conjunction

with "Murray's", Mr Fairbairn, etc., as they are all in the same direction. You would then see the process of printing cotton goods,—very well explained too by the person who takes you about.

"Whitworths" machine works, Canon Street, Brook St all very near there. (The rifle-works which have made Mr Whitworth so famous, are out of Manchester, and not easily shown.) But these works are very interesting, if you do not get a stupid *fine* young man to show you over—try rather for one of the *working* men.

*Sharp and Robberts Bridgewater Foundry.* Good to see in the Railway engine line.

LOCKETTS. *Very* clever *small* machinery. For instance, they engrave the copper rollers used in calico-printing; made a machine for making (adulterated of course) raw coffee? berries, when people began doubting *ground* coffee. These works are *well* worth seeing, but you would have to turn up the address in a directory—it is in Salford—a suburb of Manchester.

These arrangements are all supposing that I am *not* at home when you come to Manchester; but I need hardly say what a pleasure it would be to me if I should have returned home before you reached it, when I should have the pleasure of meeting you, and giving you a little more personal help.

If there is anything further that I can do by writing, pray ask me.

Yrs. truly,

E. C. GASKELL.[1]

[1] Letter in the author's possession.

This letter was written some months before another Continental holiday in company with her daughters, her future son-in-law, Thurstan Holland, her son-in-law Charles Crompton, Q.C. —brother to the 'connexion of ours' mentioned above, and Mary Ewart. It was on this occasion that Mrs Gaskell's 'novel' scheme began to materialize.

At the Hotel Steinbok, Pontresina, in August, 1864, vivified by the bracing air and invigorating cold, she wrote the early chapters of *Wives and Daughters*. Perhaps this work was the happiest labour and pleasure of her life, since it was written in various places and under varied circumstances. The newness of change and something of the perennial freshness of the Morteratsch glacier crept into the book in which she poured her choice and youthful memories.

After spending a few weeks in Switzerland, the party went on to enjoy the human element in the *Piazza di San Marco*, and the shadow, colour, grime, and cobwebs of Florence. In the birthplace of Dante and the nursery of Boccaccio, she renewed her acquaintanceship with

Landor and delighted Swinburne with her companionship. They visited pictures together, and at the Uffizi Gallery they were enraptured over the "Medusa" of Leonardo da Vinci with its detailed sense of deep tragedy—a

'tempestuous loneliness of terror'.

Adventures like these will gladden and renew a bright spirit; they are unavailing against the dilatation of a heart: The *Idus* of next March was fatefully symbolical. During a visit to Madame Mohl, Mrs Gaskell's health broke down, and she was compelled to spend a fortnight indoors. On her return to England in April, the growing apprehension for her own health quickened her country intentions, and soon afterwards she arranged to buy a house at Holybourne, near Alton in Hampshire. "The Lawn", purchased out of the £2,000 advanced to her on *Wives and Daughters*, was the surprise gift to her husband imagined two years earlier.

The task of preparing the house and installing new improvements buoyed up her spirits for a time, but behind them loomed the symptoms of her overshadowing fate. At Holybourne

then, in the fitting atmosphere of Jane Austen's last years, Mrs Gaskell wrote her last words and spudded up the dandelions from her last garden.

On Sunday, the 12th of November, 1865, she and her daughters went to church. Her son-in-law, Charlie Crompton, and Meta went for a walk. As usual, they all took tea together round the fire in the drawing-room. They were happy and cosy, and Mrs Gaskell was talking of lending her house to Lady Crompton. The mellow notes of her voice were wafted across the room when suddenly, in the middle of a sentence, she died.

'Her passing was like the ceasing of exquisite music'.

Elizabeth Cleghorn Gaskell was buried in the graveyard of Brook Street Chapel, Knutsford. She lies in the midst of her friends, her relations, and the memories which she loved so well.

. . .

The timbers of the *Téméraire* are snuff-boxes and line-props. Unrecognizable the remains of the Iron Duke repose in the crypt of Saint

Paul's, and the white head of Mr George Crabbe has not appeared in the pulpit at Trowbridge for over thirty years. Poor Scott lives only in his immortality. Likewise to dusty death have gone that second Lear, discarded father, and his one-time minister Perceval. Shelley, too, is gone, though the lyre of his intense and elemental incantations echoes to eternity. Darwin is still alive, and certain things have evolved, and the wildest dreams of the little Jew of Islington have been nearly fulfilled. Tennyson is in his prime, reviewers are beginning to recognize Browning, and *Rhoda Fleming* is finished. . . . It was a remarkable dawn that heralded Mrs Gaskell into the world. The sunset in which she died was glorious.

Taken for all in all, she was, like so many great men and women of her time, a denial of the 'age' in which she lived. The same tendency that taught us to think of our grandparents in tall hats and crinolines with Darwin and the Bible in the background and other dresses that have gone out of fashion, taught us to forget that they had some very good qualities

and even some genuine sympathies and knowledge of the human heart. Mrs Gaskell had a great analytical understanding of the human heart—a feature which counterbalances her general lack of the synthetic faculty. Just as her heart prompted her writings, and she wrote neither from necessity nor from single strictness, so her heart responded to the throbs of others. After her death, Madame Mohl was stricken with grief. 'My heart feels like a lump of lead in me', she wrote. 'If you had known what a heart *she* had. But no one did.' Perhaps Meta knew, when she said, 'Mother was sweet and dear and noble beyond words'.

She was a good woman; she was not formally righteous. She lacked calculating prudence and her mind was alien to rigid propriety. Although once concerned lest she should breathe gin on a fellow traveller, she was proud to own that she liked her glass of sherry at eleven.

She was not a feminist; she believed that woman should be man's helpmate in all spheres of life, and that her future lies in complementary comradeship, not competitive combat. She believed that women should be given every

facility to develop themselves in freedom and truth in the perfecting of life.

Remarkable for her religious tolerance, she had no antagonism to any particular sect. Charity was her watchword and her religion. Father Bernard (of *The Poor Clare*), Minister Holman in *Cousin Phillis*, the Vicar in *My Lady Ludlow*, and Mr Benson of *Ruth*, all are treated with equal deference by their kindly creator. We know that she loved her father and her husband, we know of her admiration and friendship with F. W. Newman, the Stanleys, and Kingsley, and when in Rome she was well acquainted with a Roman Catholic *Monsignore*. These living persons, clarified by the sieve of her just spirit, all passed into her books.

Her fireside was happy. She was a devoted, careful and tender wife; an honest, friendly, and affectionate mother. To deny her faults would be foolish, but they are almost obscured by her compassionate nature. About her was a certain weak sentimentality accompanied by a lachrymose sensibility. Even this was the outcome of one great gift; she would never grow old. It was not so much *who* as *what*

people are; not so much where she was, but with whom she was that mattered to her peace of mind.

She viewed life as a whole. Her love for Dante was equalled by her love for domesticity. She knew that the simple talents that go to make our home pleasures, and the qualities that go to make men like Squire Hamley and Mr Gibson, are really more important than the smell of mediocre blue-stockings and pedantic varnish; both nauseous to wholesome nostrils.

'The best in this kind are but shadows', but she was something more than the baseless fabric of a vision; the God-like reason did not fust in her unused. She had that true poetic feeling—'the voice of all man's truest instincts'—which exalts whatsoever it touches. She was one who strove that 'innocent creatures should come to no harm', one who had an eye for the mysteries of the starred heavens. And though the viol-string is broken, it is fitting that its sweet and plaintive note should echo down the years of life.

## *Chapter III*

# *THE SOCIAL NOVEL AND THE SOCIAL BACKGROUND BEFORE MARY BARTON*

'As the sonnet, which had been as a lute for lovers, became in Milton's hands a trumpet, so the novel became in theirs a sword with which to fight the cause of the oppressed.'

—MARY COLERIDGE.

THE 'social' novel began before society! It is the natural outcome of the medieval epic in which a particular person performs deeds and is surrounded by events. In the unwritten and written epics, the hero is usually a romantic, brave, and handsome creature who sometimes sees with eyes like a newly calmed sea after a boisterous tempest. The heroine is probably an embarrassingly virtuous liar, without one generous action to her credit, before whom villains become calm as lambs. Together with their fellow figures, they pass through an Æthiopian labyrinth of complicated adventures and live

happily ever afterwards. This was the general theme of a romance, although upon occasion they became didactic. Caxton, for instance, printed Malory's *Morte d'Arthur* with the intent that his readers should learn from the example set by virtuous deeds 'that they take the good and honest acts in their remembraunce and to folowe the same'.

Thus, the external problems of love, desire, and the duties of life are present in many of these fantastic forms, and the pedigree of the social novel goes back to the beginning of mankind. But gradually men grew tired of super-social chantings on life, wearied of deific beings, and craved for a truer presentment of man and the problems his life has to solve. At first these were pictures of life, and the best novels are pictures, then some persons conceived the idea of using the medium of expression with deliberate intentions, and became didactic. In other words they prostituted their art to their moral sense and became photographers who viewed life through the lenses of their own particular cameras. The novels produced under these conditions are truly social, in so far as

they are preachments on social or political questions of the day.

We may well ask here what this change of purpose from aristocratic romance to democratic novel means. It would seem that from being interested in another's acts, and deeds, and exploits, man has become more interested in *himself*, and his thoughts, and ideas, and conduct. His self-consciousness has become more developed. This social self-consciousness forms the dividing line between the romantic and the pure psychological novel. The social novel—portraying man in his external environment, as yet unabsorbed in his own individual soul—is joined by its inward significance to the psychological novel, and by its external machinery to the romance.

It is true that the social-problem novelists did not begin in earnest until the mid-forties of the last century, when social problems became sufficiently acute as to threaten the upheaval of the then existing social system. But the English novel has ever been a kind of institution which adapted itself to the changing conditions of English society, and, broadly speaking, all

novels are sympathetic studies of society. Of course it was only natural that with the advent of machinery and the dawn of unrestricted freedom for workers the novel became a highly valued medium for expressing views on social changes, modes, and manners ; something more than ' fitte to passe away the tediousness of the long winters evenings '.

Let us then take a brief survey of the complex growth of the novel as a social manifestation. So long ago as 1579 we find Lyly's extraordinary romance containing many moral sermons, and if we push farther into the Renaissance, there is the *Utopia* of Sir Thomas More sending forth the spirit of the New Learning, and showing a deep insight into the evils of society. From the time of Lyly onwards, with the exception of the romantic gap in the seventeenth century, few English creators of fiction wrote without good intentions. Their by-paths were occasionally flowery, but the moral was usually there.

Although the Age of Milton was occupied chiefly with magnified romances and barren allegories filled with perfect characters and courtly manners, yet the slow evolution of the

newspaper increased interest in life. People began to keep journals and diaries, and write biographies, and John Bunyan wrote an autobiographical allegory which was one of the early fathers of the modern novel. Before the close of the century the romance became a dull monotone in the ear of author and reader alike. They were heartily sick of seeing the world otherwise than it was, and desired to see real life.

In the year 1698, 'Astrea', to use the epithet bestowed on Mrs Aphra Behn by a malevolent gentleman named Pope, printed *Oroonoko*. This book touched a new and harmonious chord in not pretending 'to entertain you with a feigned story, or anything pieced together with romantick Accidents', but with human nature and actuality. She brought home a sense of the horrors of slavery, although her book is mainly philosophical. Upon occasion she saw beyond her times, and her proper place seems to be at the dawn of the French Revolution. But it is well to remember that she is contemporaneous with Hobbes.

In the following year an unknown writer

produced *The Adventures of Covent Garden*; a work depicting middle-class life in London. *Robinson Crusoe* appeared in 1719; shortly afterwards novel legislation pointed out the necessity of the moral tag, and Defoe protested against those editors of his *Crusoe* who expunged those moral reflections 'calculated for the infinite advantage of the reader'.[1] The very title-page of Moll Flanders prepares us for a final page of contrition in which Moll and her husband resolve to spend the remainder of their years in sincere penitence for the wicked lives they have lived.

Defoe, then, began 'the theme of the eighteenth century novel', which 'is the history of persons, regarded as moral beings, and treated in relation to each other and to society.'[2]

From Defoe to Richardson is a long ride in a short time. Richardson was a 'parson' who wrote novels instead of sermons. He was proud of his art and his serious purpose, and his oppressive sense of responsibility forces us to respect him. If we do not read, at least we

[1] See the preface to Part II of *Robinson Crusoe*.

[2] Raleigh, *The English Novel* (1894), ch. VII, p. 211.

can admire the blue-books of a genius. He teetotalized romance by *correction*, and remains social and realistic in that sense alone. He wrote, as we all know, with the idea of cautioning young persons who may be ensnared, as was Miss Pamela; of Clarissa's heroic virtues, romantic Last Will, and voluminous death; and, in general hortatory homilies 'to promote the cause of religion and virtue'. This pragmatical gentleman esteemed his *Clarissa* as worthy of a place beside Taylor's *Holy Living*. He was, in many respects, a re-gilded Lyly, and did he not borrow from Sidney the name 'Pamela'? However, rich, good, middle-class minded, and adulated Richardson—harrowed by virtue and flattery—stumbled into absurdities impossible to his scapegrace brother artist Fielding. Perhaps the creator of *Tom Jones* was a better moralist than his dictatorial contemporary, since he did *not* write with a professed moral purpose. An escaped wild liver often becomes a shrewd discerner and dissector of the world's ways, and knows too much of hypocrisy and cant to be duped by them. Anyhow, Fielding was a good fellow who dished

up the fashionable society in which he moved, added *Don Quixote* and *Robinson Crusoe* as condiments, and observed the kitchen. Nevertheless, it is from Richardson rather than Fielding that the modern social novel descends.

In regions afterwards to be portrayed by the ken of Richardson and Fielding, the poets of science now began their triumphs. In 1764, Weaver Hargreaves sowed the seeds of future distress, happiness, and novels, by inventing a clumsy spinning jenny. This was quickly followed by a pot-bellied barber's spinning-mill and fertile Watt's steam engine. These are three of a long list of inventions applicable to textiles, coal-mining, iron and steel. This conquest of the industrial world meant a change in the fabric of the old social order; a change, diverse and varied, running through a winding stream of tendencies. The peasants began to move from the comfortable chair of silent vegetation to the stool of Chartist unrepentance, and mechanical serfs became machine servers. But the change was not particularly unwelcome to most of them. Anti-capitalist 'historians' have always manipulated shadows to serve their

own ends: Care certainly harboured in the old cottages whose homely couches knew many broken slumbers. It is an undeniable fact that the 'happy peasants' improved their conditions by flocking into the hellish factories. They were anxious to grasp opportunities which brought them, at first, good wages and steady employment. Enclosure, a supposed cause of the rush into industrialism, was *stimulated* by it. Sweating and capricious harvests are not the especial products of machinery, nor were slums originally the outcome of ill-treatment of men by masters.[1] Of course the mania of the rush to industrialism brought with it towns hastily thrown together, and the ill conditions that proximity brings. If we go forward a little and look at England after Waterloo, we should see, in the light of present-day experiences, that war effects unemployment and poverty far more than actual industrial change. Thus it would seem that the great advance of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was capitalism, because it brought with it *self*-consciousness

[1] Even so shrewd an observer as Mandeville perversely mistook the vices of industrialism for its foundation.

in the nation, consciousness of ill conditions. This awakening of the human heart in a 'moral' age brought forth in the nineteenth century those novelists—social advocates—who wrote *for* a specific purpose rather than with a purpose. As examples of what has been said, Richardson wrote with the general idea of improving morals, whereas the novels of Kingsley and other Victorians have a defined application to particular problems.

*The Vicar of Wakefield* appeared in the incipient gleam of the Industrial Revolution. Goldsmith, following Fielding's footsteps, devoted two chapters of his book to the prison-system of his time. One chapter is headed 'To make laws complete they should reward as well as punish'. (xxxvi). He questions the right of 'capitally punishing offences of a slight nature'.

> 'Natural law', he says, 'gives me no right to take away the life of him who steals my property, as by that the horse he steals is as much his property as mine. If, then, I have any right, it must be from a compact made between us, that he who deprives the other of his horse shall die. But this is a false compact; because no man has a right to barter his life any more than to take it away, as it is not his own. And besides, the compact is inadequate, and would be set aside even

in a court of modern equity, as there is a great penalty for a very trifling convenience, since it is far better that two men should live than that one man should ride' (ch. xxvii.).

Henry Brooke, in his unreadable *The Fool of Quality* (1766-70), talks of imprisonment for debt, women, commerce, and the British Constitution. This book was a favourite with John Wesley, and Kingsley liked and reprinted it in 1859. Already we see that men are beginning to think of welfare work. The rapid development of mechanical novelties disturbed the very framework of society, and apart from heartfelt interests, imaginative persons were glad to make the acquaintance of a new stimulus to their minds.

In 1776 Adam Smith published his *Wealth of Nations* with its underlying passion for reform, and unbounded influence on literature and law. And before the break of the century, William Godwin, under the influence of Thomas Holcroft and the French Revolution, produced a couple of novels. Godwin's communistic views were challenged by the eleventh commandment of Malthus: Thou shalt not procreate until thou cans't support six children.

Here is the atmosphere of social reform which thickened on the appearance of Ricardo and John Stuart Mill.

By this time Mrs Radcliffe, engulfed by the reaction to the old romance, was writing lovely books to take the hope out of life, whilst the attentions of Fanny Burney, Maria Edgeworth, and the inimitable Jane Austen were engaged with novels domestic rather than social. It is significant that the talented educationalist satirized the romances of the period in one of her *Moral Tales*. Mrs Radcliffe, too, fell under the delicate lash of Miss Austen, in *Northanger Abbey*. It is pleasant, though untrue, to think that the diaphanous muslins of these ladies were untouched by the tools of industry.

With the advent of *Waverley*, the problem novel disappears for a decade or two. Solely in his 'national' outlook is Scott social, where the 'two nations' join together against their common enemies. Scott's novels were, in one sense, the ancestors of Disraeli's; the hope of the Young Englanders was to restore a 'Merrie England' and a romantic feudalism which never existed.

*The Fair Maid of Perth* (1828) overshadowed

the first of a new series of books betokening a revival of consciousness of social problems. That great second-rate novelist Bulwer was first in the field with *Pelham,* a partly autobiographical book dealing with his interest in Utilitarianism : the system that will produce the greatest amount of happiness for the whole community. Objectively the theory was right, but it was left to Dickens to point out the Gradgrind-child of ' facts ' and no ideals. *Pelham* was followed by *Paul Clifford,* in which Lytton attacks the vicious system under which capital punishment was awarded for almost every crime.[1] The almost theatrical melodrama of the book inclines the reader to doubt the sincerity of his plea for the reform of the prison system, whilst its good influence is certainly questionable —since it inspired a host of novelettes in which the hero is a thief. Says the hero, in ch. xxv :

> I hesitate not to tell you, my lord judge—to proclaim to you, gentlemen of the jury, that the laws which I have broken through my life I despise in death ! Your laws are but of two classes : the one makes criminals, the other punishes them. I have suffered by the one—I am about to perish by the other.

[1] See *ante,* pp. 86-7.

Other writers, like Harriet Martineau, felt impelled to write and inform people how they should conduct themselves. Since ignorance of the legislation of social life causes a nation to suffer, the good lady thought that she would make herself an instrument of public enlightenment. Naturally she knew that she was in the right, 'and those in the right need never lose temper' adds the philosophical spinster. Most of her stories are really chapters of a treatise on political economy. Her explanations of social theories are concise and clear, but as tales they are improbable and inartistic. Upon the whole, *Deerbrook* excepted, she lacked sentiment, and all good novels are sentimental.

Someone has said appositely, that the period surrounding the birthday of Kingsley's *Yeast* was essentially one of fermentation. The high prices of goods and the low wages paid to 'hands' have been noticed elsewhere. The truck system of paying workmen in goods instead of in money was often in force. The rookeries, with natural drainage and no sanitation, were the parents of filth and wretchedness and the

progenitors of crime ; they were breeding houses of fevers, thieves, and prostitutes ; hotbeds where society is overcome by pain and sorrow dreadful in their consequences. No wonder that the humanitarian group of Kingsley, Dickens, Disraeli, and Mrs Gaskell saw the necessity of the investigation and relief of the appalling conditions of the working classes. Hence their veracious fictions. They all moralized, but they were wise in crying first ' Feed before you moralize '.

Kingsley saw that the new element in democracy could not be stopped. The poor have heads as well as hearts, and their movements must be Christianized, he said.

Dickens, that great pleader for sympathy and humanity, had already pointed out the moral qualities of the poor. His writings make him a medium between Kingsley and Disraeli, because his characterization was greater than his political insight. The didactic side of *Hard Times* fell flat.

The great prize-novelist Disraeli advocated a benevolent aristocracy. In *Coningsby* he gave us ' a picture of the great world of the thirties,

painted with all his feeling for the gorgeous and spectacular, and a gallery of political portraits painted with perfect insight, sympathy, and comprehension'.[1] In *Sybil* he imagined a new generation of the aristocracy of England whose intelligence was open to the responsibilities of their position. He drew, too, an awful picture of the inferno of industrialism. Here are a few sentences about coal-miners of both sexes—all clad in male attire and hideously coarse in their language :

> Oaths that men might shudder at, issued from lips born to breathe words of sweetness. Yet these are to be, some are, the mothers of England ! . . . Naked to the waist, an iron chain fastened to a belt of leather runs between their legs clad in canvas trousers, while on hands and feet an English girl, for twelve, sometimes for sixteen hours a day, hauls and hurries tubs of coal up subterranean roads, dark, precipitous, and plashy ; circumstances that seem to have escaped the notice of the Society for the Abolition of Negro Slavery. Those worthy gentlemen too appear to have been singularly unconscious of the sufferings of the little trappers, which was remarkable, as many of them were in their own employ.[2]

Lord Morley thought *Sybil* the sincerest of

[1] *Life of Benjamin Disraeli*, by W. F. Monypenny, vol. II, ch. VII, p. 219.

[2] *Sybil*, ch. III.

Disraeli's novels. 'Mr Disraeli's brooding imaginativeness of conception gave him a view of the extent of the social revolution as a whole, which was wider, if it did not go deeper, than that of any other contemporary observer.'[1] Yes, *Sybil* is a good book, because Dizzy was an acute observer and a graphic writer and not (as Trollope thought) altogether an audacious conjurer with a wealth of tinsel, the glory of pasteboard, and the wit of hairdressers.

Disraeli's idea of a benevolent aristocracy is wide apart from the underlying theme of Mrs Gaskell: to 'raise' the lower classes. The sympathies of the two novelists were evoked in different ways. The themes of their symphonies were similar, though pitched in diverse keys. Let us turn, then, from *Sybil* to the cognate work of Mrs Gaskell.

A few words in passing: Whatsoever its defects, the factory system called up the spirit and energies of the working classes as participators in knowledge, religion and culture. The system which inspired the two nations and two novels of Disraeli is forging them into one.

[1] Morley, *Life of Richard Cobden* (1881), vol. I, p. 297.

## *Chapter IV*

## *MARY BARTON: NORTH AND SOUTH*

'Some there are whose name will live
Not in the memories but the hearts of men,
Because those hearts they comforted and cheer'd.'
—W. S. LANDOR (To Mrs. Gaskell).

### § i

*MARY BARTON* and *North and South* are two movements on one theme. They deal with the subject of employer and employee. In her first novel (1848) Mrs Gaskell views the social problem from the position of the 'hands'; in *North and South* (1854) from that of the masters. Although both novels were written with a purpose, the novelist never obtrudes that purpose. Her motive was an endeavour to reconcile masters and men through sympathy. It was humane rather than political. In *Sybil*, Disraeli had provided a book of principles. Mrs Gaskell's books are studies of character and scenes. She presented things as she saw them, and

she felt it was not her business to moralize on the justice of this or that, or to admonish any particular class. She desired a complete confidence—in simple faith and loving trust—between masters and men; not artificial ties.

In an earlier chapter we have shown that *Mary Barton* was written to ease a burden on her heart and was fired by the conditions surrounding her daily life in Manchester. She was amazed at the abyss between workmen and their employers; how little they understood one another. She wished to bridge the gulf by pointing out their want of appreciation of each other's qualities, and especially the cold indifference of some employers of labour to the working sufferers.

She saw that injustice lies heavier on the working-classes than on other branches of society, but she saw too that justice and kindliness will not come out of violence—that retrogression of social reform. Salvation does not come through the social pessimism which means destruction.

Many of the Lancashire mill-owners were not directly acquainted with their work-people.

They hired foremen spinners. The spinners —many of them more autocratic than the masters—hired the 'hands'. Thus there was no personal contact or sympathies between the two classes.[1] Not infrequently the real aim of the masters was to get away from workmen and Manchester. Once out of the smoky city they had little or no concern with the labouring hive from which they were glad to escape to ease and comfort, unless it was to suggest that improvidence was the cause of misery amongst the working-classes, at a time when families of six had about 7/- a week, when bread was 6d per lb![2] Contrariwise, some

[1] Mary Howitt in a letter to her daughter Margaret dated from Uttoxeter, May 21, 1854, says: 'Last evening a rich silk manufacturer of Macclesfield called, with his wife, on us. He has settled in the neighbourhood; is a fat, jolly conservative, whose work-people are emphatically *hands*, and who thinks "Mary Barton" a dangerous, bad book. He had been to the Royal Academy. He said he could not, for the soul of him, tell what to make of Holman Hunt's "Light of the World"; whether it was good or bad he did not know. He looked at it for half an hour, and was never so puzzled by any picture before.'

[2] 'The English middle-class, especially the manufacturing class, which is enriched directly by means of the poverty of the workers, persists in ignoring this poverty. This class . . . will not confess, even to itself, that the workers are in distress because it, the property-holding, manufacturing class, must bear the moral responsibility for this distress.' Engels, *Condition of the Working-Class in England in* 1844, 1892, p. 17.

of the middle classes, though few employers of labour, interested themselves in the conditions, moral and physical, of the masses, and however futile their inquiries and attempted solutions may have been, at least they desired the betterment of their fellow creatures. Mrs Gaskell's two books are in themselves proofs that her own era, often decried, was decidedly not inferior to past epochs.

The authoress of *Mary Barton* and *North and South* realized that there was much to be said on both sides. She saw clearly that so long as the relations of masters and men is no more settled in theory than it is in practice, there could be no settlement of the industrial problem. But she saw a far higher thing; that it is the duty of a community to attend to the sufferings of their fellow creatures. She presented the problem, and indirectly challenged the state to solve it.

§ ii

In *Mary Barton* Mrs Gaskell describes the symptoms of distress prevalent in this country from 1839 to 1841, when a series of bad harvests

was followed by a fall in wages and a rise in prices, and when changes in economic conditions, due to the rapid progress of mechanical inventions, engendered the evil genius of 'unskilled labour'. As Carlyle expressed it, 'the giant steam-engine in a giant English Nation will here create violent demand for labour, and will there annihilate demand'.

> For three years past trade had been getting worse and worse, and the price of provisions higher and higher. This disparity between the amount of the earnings of the working classes and the price of their food, occasioned, in more cases than could well be imagined, disease and death. Whole families went through a gradual starvation. They only wanted a Dante to record their sufferings.[1]

The severe pressure of want and danger produced by such conditions was further stressed by the Corn Law Act of 1773, by which foreign wheat could enter this country only when its price was high. Such a tariff was bound in course of time to cause revolt. At a public dinner given in a Manchester hotel in September, 1838, nearly sixty persons, headed by Cobden and Bright, formed themselves into a society

[1] *Mary Barton*, ch. VIII, p. 94. Knutsford edition.

for the promotion of the principles of free-trade and became the Anti-Corn-Law League. In the spring days of the following year a great chartist petition was framed 'imploring Parliament to hear witnesses who could testify to the unparalleled destitution of the manufacturing districts'.[1] The rejection of the government of the People's Charter further embittered the feelings of the working-men, although it led to the repeal of the Corn Laws in 1846.

§ iii

The MS of *Mary Barton* was accorded a similar reception to that given to Charlotte Brontë's *The Professor*. It passed slowly and heavily from publisher to publisher. Mrs Browning, in a letter to Mary Russell Mitford dated 'Florence: December 13, 1850', says that the original draft of the novel was shown to Mrs A. T. Thompson, in deference to whose judgment certain alterations were made.

Subsequently it was offered to all or nearly all the publishers in London and rejected. Chapman and

[1] *Ibid*, p. 96.

Hall[1] accepted and gave a hundred pounds for the copyright of the work; and though the success did not, perhaps (that is quite possible), induce any liberality with regard to copies, they gave *another hundred pounds* upon printing the second edition, and it was not in the bond to do so.

Mrs Browning concludes her letter with an interesting personal criticism of the book, and as the impression made upon the poetess it is worth quoting:

For *Mary Barton* I am a little, little disappointed, do you know . . . There is power and truth—she can shake and she can pierce—but I wish half the book away, it is so tedious every now and then; and besides I want more beauty, more air from the universal world—these class-books must always be defective as works of art. How could I help being disappointed a little when Mrs Jameson told me that since the *Bride of Lammermoor*, nothing had appeared equal to *Mary Barton?* Then the style of the book is slovenly and given to a kind of phraseology which would be vulgar even as colloquial English. Oh, it is a powerful book in many ways. You are not to set me down as hypercritical. Probably the author will write herself clear of her faults: she has strength enough.[2]

[1] John Forster was reader of MSS for Chapman and Hall, in which capacity he recommended *Mary Barton* for publication.

[2] *Letters of Elizabeth Barrett Browning*, 1898, vol. I, p. 472.

H. F. Chorley, who reviewed Mrs Gaskell's book for the *Athenæum*, thought differently of her style: 'The author has made use of the Lancashire dialect . . . with ease, spirit, and nicety in selection. By all who have paid any attention to kindred subjects . . . this will be accepted as high commendation'.[1] The *Prospective* reviewer called it a poem in prose, and found the incidents so happily arranged and flowing so easily and naturally out of each other with the progress of the narrative, that he almost suspected a long-practised pen. 'The style is full of life and colour, betraying a quick observant eye.' So much for contemporary criticism. Let us turn to the story itself.

§ iv

John Barton having lost his wife, and feeling the pinch of a distressful period, becomes a Chartist and joins a trade union. His only daughter, Mary, a beautiful girl, has attracted the attentions of the son of Barton's employer —Mr Carson, a wealthy mill-owner. Her vanity

[1] *The Athenæum*, Oct. 21, 1848.

is naturally aroused by the feminine desire (instability of character?) to become a fine lady, and she deludes herself into the belief that she is in love with Harry Carson. At the same time she is not unaware that she is deeply loved by a young mechanic, Jem Wilson, of her own class. A brief period elapses, and Jem declares his love for Mary—of course only to be refused. This refusal, however, reveals to Mary the true state of her heart and draws forth her regrets the moment it is done. She decides to forget Carson, and endeavours to evade further meetings with him. Other forces are acting at the same time with the idea of accomplishing this result. Mary's Aunt Esther, a fallen woman, who has drawn some profit from bitter experience, has secretly observed young Carson's intimacy with her niece, and she mistrusts him. Esther confides in Jem Wilson, who manfully resolves to guard Mary. He meets Carson and asks him if he means fair and honourable by her. The young 'gentleman' resents Jem's intrusion and tells him not to meddle with what does not concern him. A violent discussion follows during which

Carson strikes Jem across the face with a cane. The artisan retaliates, when a policeman, who had been sauntering about for some time, appears.

> 'Shall I take him to the lock-ups for assault, sir?' said No. B. 72.
>
> 'No, no! I struck him first', exclaimed Carson. They part unforgiving and with threats.

In the meantime John Barton has been irritated by the ill success of the Chartist deputation which he represented in London. He returns, poverty-stricken, and is thrown out of employment by a strike—the apex on which the story rests.

The day arrives on which the masters are to receive a deputation of the work-people, who arrived in such dilapidated coats and trousers 'that they might have read the opinions of that worthy Professor Teufeldröckh, in *Sartor Resartus*'. At the meeting Harry Carson is the head of the extreme party among the masters, who pledged themselves not to support any society having for its object interference with the masters' powers. Such a resolution,

considering that the workers present were all members of a Trade Union, was sufficiently provocative of animosity, and of course attempts at reconciliation proved fruitless. Harry Carson had previously made a caricature of the lank, ragged, and famine-stricken men as they stood before the door of the meeting-place. One of the workmen obtains this picture and takes it to a subsequent private meeting of his Trade Union. At this meeting a number of the thin, gaunt, opium-eased work-people take an oath to assassinate one of the class whom they distrust.[1] Lots are cast to decide who shall perpetrate the crime. Mary's father draws the lot of the assassin. Harry Carson is destined to be his victim.

Barton borrows Jem Wilson's gun, and policeman B 72 points out Jem as the man he had seen engaged in a scuffle with young Carson. Mary discovers that the murderer is

[1] Mrs Gaskell possibly had in mind the trial of Hunter and four others, cotton-spinners of Glasgow (at Edinburgh, on January 3, 1838, and the seven following days) for conspiracy and the murder of John Smith. See *Modern State Trials*, by W. C. Townsend, vol. II, pp. 156 *et seq.* (1850). See also Hansard, *Parliamentary Debates*, N.S., vol. XIII, p. 1402, where an oath is quoted as having been exacted from members of a certain Scotch Trade Union.

her father and henceforth directs all her energies to the task of saving Jem. She proves that the alleged act took place when Jem was elsewhere, and at his trial the verdict is 'Not Guilty'. Barton confesses his guilt to Carson's father and dies immediately afterwards.

It will be seen from this outline that there is nothing surprising in the plot of Mary Barton. The trial and the closing scenes, with their over-religious sentiment, tend to drift into the conventional melodrama of the lesser novelists. We all know that the prisoner will almost be pronounced guilty and that some witness will arrive in the nick of time to save him. We are given the luxury of too many death-bed scenes (Mrs Barton, the Wilson-twins, George Wilson, Davenport, Esther, Alice, and Barton are killed off); Mrs Gaskell's art was not sufficiently consummate to dispense with them. Unlike Hardy or George Eliot, she could not pen fatalistic characters which would produce emotional effects on her readers. And certainly no ex-factory hand and prostitute talked like Esther:

> Where have I been? What have I been doing? Why do you torment me with questions like these?

> Can you not guess? But the story of my life is wanted to give force to my speech, I will tell it to you.[1]

What then are the qualities in her book which hold our attention? Is it that there is a compassion and simplicity underlying everything she says? Is not there a feeling that she has concentrated her thoughts on truth? Her characters are alive because she has drawn them according to the working of motive and conscience. Her scenes live because of the fidelity with which she has portrayed them. There are not a few memorable passages in her book. The opening description of Green Heys Fields, the fire, the meeting of Mary with her hunted father, and Mary's chase after the one witness who is capable of clearing her accused lover. She fixes the nuances and catches the phases of the 'hands' lives. Everywhere in this book and elsewhere she shows how carefully she has watched masters and men, and wives and daughters: their pleasures, their remarks, their pursuits. With Gray, Scott, Wordsworth, Crabbe, and Dickens before

[1] Ch. XIV.

her, she realized that the germs of dignity lie in some Hodges; that the highest sentiments are those of the heart. And if a writer's voice is in harmony with the vibrations of the human heart, then he or she takes a place in our literature.[1]

§ v

A consideration of *North and South* leads to the belief that it is artistically superior to *Mary Barton*. Mrs Gaskell in her earlier and more powerful book prompts the thought that there is sometimes melodrama in life, although her arrangement of death-bed scenes rather strains poetic justice to its uttermost limits. In *North and South* there are no crude appeals to our emotions, and in spite of another overdose of lachrymal spectacles (another five deaths), the happy ending has not the characteristic 'note of duty' sound.

Mrs Gaskell began this book with a twofold purpose: firstly that of presenting the ideas

[1] Compare *Mary Barton* for a moment with a predecessor such as *Belinda*, that fashionable angel, or the many love-sick and ennui die-hards that came before its appearance. The strength of it will then appear in full flavour.

of *Mary Barton* from the point of view of the employer, and secondly to show that the higher elements of man are present both in the north and south of England; that manufacturers may have instincts as lofty as those of a southern parson and his daughter.

> 'I won't deny that I am proud of belonging to a town', says Thornton, 'the necessities of which gave birth to such grandeur of conception [as Nasmyth's steam hammer]. I would rather be a man toiling, suffering—nay, failing and successless—here, than lead a dull prosperous life in the old worn groves of what you call more aristocratic society down in the South, with their slow days of careless ease. One may be clogged with honey and unable to rise and fly.'[1]

The character of John Thornton is admirably drawn. He is partly a replica of Charlotte Brontë's Robert Moore and half prototype of Nasmyth the engineer, just as Daniel and William Grant of Manchester partly stood for his picture of the Brothers Cheeryble of Dickens. Thornton is the man of action and exertion who sees that 'our glory and our beauty rise out of our inward strength'. At the beginning

[1] Ch. X.

of the story he is inclined to be wrong-headed, but under the tuition and influence of Mr Hale and his daughter Margaret, his character expands. From being alive to distant and dead to near things, from cold aloofness and the desire to be head of a firm which should be known for generations, he came to realize that the parallel lives—close but never touching—that he and his employees led, should draw closer together. Master and man should recognize that 'we have all of us one human heart'.

> And thence arose that intercourse, which, though it might not have the effect of preventing all future clash of opinion and action, when the occasion arose, would, at any rate, enable both master and man to look upon each other with far more charity and sympathy, and bear with each other more patiently and kindly.[1]

Margaret taught him to see the individual victims of what had previously been to him the progress of industry. Thornton, in his private life, is the apotheosis of an exacting society. The dens of vice and mysteries frequented by Arthur Pendennis and George

[1] Ch. L.

Warrington—where David Copperfield could not have entered without pollution—*Mr* Thornton could not have touched. He is eminently respectable. There is no such thing as a haunt of nights in the society of Mrs Gaskell. In her books when a young man goes astray his character ceases to be, and he becomes a beacon of warning to others.

The heroine of the story, Margaret Hale with her Zenobia ways, and 'the making of a Cleopatra in her, if only she were a little more pagan', has some affinity with Hardy's Eustacia Vie, besides whom, in heaven, she will 'probably sit between the Héloïses and the Cleopatras'.

> Her throat curved outwardly like a swan's. Her eyelids were over her eyes; her teeth were shut, not compressed; her lips were just parted over them, allowing the white line to be seen between their curves. Her slow deep breathings dilated her thin and beautiful nostrils. Her head thrown back in the old proud attitude, her glossy raven hair, her fine grained skin.[1]

There is also something of the proud amazon Shirley in her character. She is not *too* well-bred and a few of her expressions are snobbish.

[1] Chs. XX and XXIV.

It took some time to teach her that even a manufacturer may be concerned with literature and the accomplishments of a gentleman. But in spite of her pride she grew to love a captain of industry.

The religious difficulties of Margaret's father seem unimportant in our eyes. But he was quite a likely character in Mrs Gaskell's day. His high-mindedness and honesty in relinquishing his living for conscience's sake is sympathetically drawn. Although Mrs Gaskell touches on this question lightly, we are made to believe that Mr Hale felt it a duty to leave the fold of the Anglican Church. It is probable that traits in J. A. Froude's character went towards the composition of Mr Hale.[1] In response to a friendly critique of Mr (afterwards Sir William) Fairbairn, Mrs Gaskell wrote :

> Mr Hale is not a 'sceptic'; he has *doubts*, and can resolve greatly about great things, and is capable of self-sacrifice in theory; but in the details of practice he is weak and vacillating. I know a character just like his, a clergyman who has left the Church from principle, and in that did finely; but

[1] See *ante*, p. 25.

his daily life is a constant unspoken regret that he did so, although he would do it again if need be.

Of the other characters that of Nicholas Higgins is one of the best in the piece. It is significant that Fairbairn thought him an excellent representative of the Lancashire operative. His picture is a worthy companion to that of the capitalist Thornton. His sad, though sane, outlook on life, calls forth our pity :

> God help 'em ! North and South have each gotten their own troubles. If work's sure and steady theer, labour's paid at starvation prices ; while here we'n rucks o' money coming in one quarter, and ne'er a farthing th' next. For sure, th' world is in a confusion that passes me or any other man to understand ; it needs fettling, and who's to fettle it, if it's as you folks say, and there's nought but what we see ? [1]

The farewell to the New Forest and the Hale's first impressions of Manchester (Milton) are excellent specimens of the writer's pathos and literary power :

> Here there was no sound. The robin had gone away into the vast stillness of the night. Now and then a cottage door in the distance was opened and shut, as if to admit the tired labourer to his home ;

[1] Ch. XXXVII.

but that sounded very far away. A stealthy, creeping, cranching sound among the crisp fallen leaves of the forest, beyond the garden, seemed almost close at hand. Margaret knew it was some poacher. Sitting up in her bedroom this past autumn, with the light of her candle extinguished, and purely revelling in the solemn beauty of the heavens and earth, she had many a time seen the light, noiseless leap of the poachers over the garden fence, their quick tramp across the dewy moonlit lawn, their disappearance in the black still shadow beyond. The wild adventurous freedom of their life had taken her fancy ; she felt inclined to wish them success ; she had no fear of them. But to-night she was afraid, she knew not why . . .[1]

For several miles before they reached Milton, they saw a deep lead-coloured cloud hanging over the horizon in the direction in which it lay. It was all the darker from the contrast with the pale grey-blue of the wintry sky ; for in Heston there had been the earliest signs of frost. Nearer to the town the air had a faint taste and smell of smoke ; perhaps, after all, more or less of the fragrance of grass and herbage than any positive taste or smell. Quickly they were whirled over long, straight, hopeless streets of regularly-built houses, all small and of brick. Here and there a great oblong many-windowed factory stood up, like a hen among her chickens, puffing out black 'unparliamentary' smoke, and sufficiently accounting for the cloud which Margaret had taken to foretell rain. As they drove through

[1] Ch. VI.

> the larger and wider streets, from the station to the hotel, they had to stop constantly; great loaded lorries blocked up the not over-wide thoroughfares . . . here every van, every wagon and truck, bore cotton, either in the raw shape in bags, or the woven shape in bales of calico.[1]

Elsewhere we have referred to the piecemeal handicap and the limitations imposed by Dickens, as Editor of *Household Words*, on Mrs Gaskell. But when she came to prepare her serial for publication in book-form, by a few excisions and additions, the novelist perfected the construction of her book to a degree well-nigh faultless.[2] Although the harangues and debates between employer and employed and the ethics involved therein tend to sprag the story, they ultimately give way before the fierce love of Thornton for Margaret Hale. We feel that Mrs Gaskell owed something to that pale, small, fiery little person who stole into Victoria's formal prime—Jane Eyre. The hero and heroine are clearly drawn, the subordinate characters are distributed about them with the nicest discrimination, and there are few irrelevant episodes or digressions in the book.

[1] Ch. VII. [2] See Appendix II.

## *Chapter V*

## *CRANFORD*[1]

There is no canker in her fragrant posy to spoil the beauty of her budding name.

To-day, after seven decades of commendation, it seems almost an impertinence to praise *Cranford*, and time has quenched criticism of a book of our hearts. Only a woman of genius, quick of wit, and not less quick of feeling, could have written *Cranford*, said a contemporary of Mrs Gaskell in 1853. When Charlotte Brontë wished to express a consoling thought, a friend's visit, or something welcome and pleasant, her simile was 'very like a page of *Cranford*'. John Forster never 'saw so nice a touch'. Dickens observed the 'tenderest and most delicate manner' in her 'delightful' papers,

[1] *Westminster Review*, vol. LIX, July 1853.

and but for his intervention Mrs Gaskell's book would have ended with the death of Captain Brown, in Chapter II. George Eliot had the pleasure of reading it whilst she was writing the *Scenes from Clerical Life* (*nota bene*). Monckton Milnes placed it on his shelves beside *Elia*. '*Cranford* is everywhere where people have individuality and kindliness', said Anne Thackeray. In a triple criticism, with *Sylvia's Lovers* and *Wives and Daughters*, Henry James called her delicate essay an admirable thing which time has consecrated. Ruskin admired it as 'a finished little piece of study of human nature' and by gratifying Mrs Gaskell with his praise, drew down upon himself a long letter about Knutsford, in which she vouched for the authenticity of the cat that swallowed the lace and the cow that wore the flannel jacket, and added a 'Cranford' experience not to be found in her book. Two old-maidish friends of her girlhood had just laid down a new carpet with white spaces over it, as a welcome to a niece who had made a grand marriage. It is true that they did not find out the treat until the day after they arrived,

when they noticed the neat maid-servant performing

> a sort of *pas de basque*, hopping and striding with more grace than security to the dishes she held. When she had left the room, one lady said to the other: 'Sister! I think she'll do!'—'Yes', said the other; 'she's managed very nicely'.

And then they explained that she was a fresh servant and they had just covered their floor with a new carpet, 'and they had been teaching this girl to vault or jump gracefully' over the white places 'lest her feet might dirty them!'

*Cranford* has been translated into French, German, and Hungarian. Many American editions are to be seen in the Library of Congress. It has been distorted into dramatic form both in Europe and in the New World. So much for its universality.

Mrs Gaskell began to write in the 'Cranford' manner before *Cranford*. *Mr Harrison's Confessions*[1] was its precursor by a few months. *There* 'Cranford' is 'Duncombe' with its widows and old maids in rich abundance. She

[1] First appeared in *The Ladies' Companion*, Feb., March, and April, 1851.

resumed the same manner in *My Lady Ludlow* (1858), and it peeps out in subtler form in *Wives and Daughters*.

Here are two pieces of humour from *Mr Harrison's Confessions :*

> I heard Miss Caroline beg Jack to take a glass of wine, and I saw him help himself to what appeared to be port ; but in an instant he set it down from his lips, exclaiming, ' Vinegar, by Jove ! ' He made the most horribly wry face : and Miss Tomkinson came up in a severe hurry to investigate the affair. It turned out it was some black currant wine, on which she particularly piqued herself ; I drank two glasses of it to ingratiate myself with her, and can testify to its sourness. I don't think she noticed my exertions, she was so much engrossed in listening to Jack's excuses for his malapropos observation. He told her, with the gravest face, that he had been a teetotaller so long that he had but a confused recollection of the distinction between wine and vinegar, particularly eschewing the latter, because it had been twice fermented ; and that he had imagined Miss Caroline had asked him to take toast-and-water, or he should never have touched the decanter (ch. VIII).
>
> I had my eyes open to every glimpse of Sophy. I am overstocked with gloves now that I bought at that time, by way of making errands into the shops where I saw her black gown. I bought pounds upon pounds of arrowroot, till I was tired of the eternal arrowroot

> puddings Mrs Rose gave me. I asked her if she could not make bread of it, but she seemed to think that would be expensive ; so I took to soap as a safe purchase. I believe soap improves by keeping (ch. XII).

These passages are obviously inspired by the same vein that produced 'It was very difficult to steer clear between Mrs Forrester's deafness and Mrs Jamieson's sleepiness',[1] and which portrayed Miss Betty Barker's cow.

This poor cow, by the way, on whom there has been much rumination, was probably a grandchild of the animal owned by the Misses Anderson of *Deerbrook*. There are other sparks in the ashes of Miss Martineau's book ; quaint humours and self-respecting pride, which remind one of Mrs Gaskell. The sparks may be faint ; they are there nevertheless. 'The inhabitants of Deerbrook are as accomplished in the arts of gossip as any villagers in England',[2] and the predilection of the villagers for their apothecary—young Mr Hope—calls to mind the young surgeon Mr Harrison. Then again, it is certain that Mrs Norris, Mrs Bennet, Mrs Rowland

[1] *Cranford*, ch. VII. [2] *Deerbrook* (1839), vol. VIII, ch. IV.

(of *Deerbrook*) and Mrs Gibson would have been good friends or enemies. Passages from Miss Martineau's book, then, supply the links between Jane Austen and Mrs Gaskell, sought after by every critic :

> On the day of the Rowlands' great dinner-party, when all was to be so stately for the hunters, when the new dessert service was procured from Staffordshire, the fish had not arrived from London. This was certainly fact ; the fish had come by coach the next morning. And what was still more remarkable, it had not occurred to Mrs Rowland that such an accident might happen—was very likely to happen ; and, as if she had been an inexperienced house-keeper, she had not any dish in reserve, in case of the non-arrival of the fish. It was said that Mrs Rowland had sat down to table with a face perfectly crimson with anxiety and vexation. To such a temper as hers, what a vexation it must have been ! There was a counterpart to this story for Mrs Rowland. She fancied that Mrs Grey's friends, the Andersons, must have looked rather foolish on occasion of their great syllabub party. She hoped the Miss Andersons trained their pupils better than their cows : they had a sad obstreperous cow, she understood. Some of the young ladies had lured it up the lawn with a potato, and got it to stand still to be milked ; but when somebody began to sing (she had no doubt it was Miss Ibbotson who sang), the poor animal found the music was not to its taste, and, of course,

it kicked away the china bowl, and pranced down the lawn again. There was a dirge sung over the syllabub, no doubt. The poor Miss Andersons must have been terribly annoyed.[1]

Someone has said that *Cranford* is without plot, purpose, or melodrama. The papers garnered together under the cherished village-name are not essays. Together they do not make a story. They have no literary derivation in the true sense of that misunderstood term. In them there is the refinement of Addison, with something of the vigour of Swift.

There is a feeling that *Cranford* is a legacy of Miss Austen's sensibility. The Miss Jenkyns are like two of Jane's heroines grown old, and they seem a bit strange in their native surroundings. The sketches also invite comparison with Miss Austen's work because there is the same dramatic tendency in the construction of her writings as in those of Mrs Gaskell, because, in other words, both writers re-create in our minds the incidents they present; to us their pages are not so much descriptions as facts themselves. There the comparison must end,

[1] *Deerbrook*, vol. III, ch. II, pp. 22-3.

for, in *Cranford*, Mrs Gaskell was a portrayer —not a plotter, and in this respect, with her delicate outlines of personalities, her book seems more akin to the *De Coverley* papers. Somehow the spirit of the eighteenth-century haunts *Cranford;* something of 'the elegant shrubbery and the fragrant parterre', but lacking the close atmosphere and the artificial lights. The serenity of Dr Primrose is not unlike that of Miss Matty, and they are both symbols of potential humanity.

Critics have compared *Cranford* to the scenic work of *Our Village*. The present writer has searched Miss Mitford's tedious pages in vain for a similarity either apparent or real. Miss Mitford was no lover of moonlight; she did not like that 'cold, pale, trembling ray'. Hers was the mirth of content. She was, in Mrs Browning's happy phrase, 'a sort of prose Crabbe in the sun'.

*Cranford* conjures up other names. Charles Lamb, of course, and the same species of healthful humour, genuine and delightful, is sustained in the *Alhambra* and other writings of Washington Irving. There is a passage in chapter XI which

calls to mind *The Dream Children* of Elia. It was prompted by the same *human* touch. This same outlook drew Sir Walter Raleigh's attention to the lovable faults of Addison's *Sir Roger*, whose 'virtues may be smiled at as well as praised', a phrase which it would not be inappropriate to steal for either of the Miss Jenkyns.

It is this human element that calls forth our admiration, respect, and love. The utter pettinesses of the provincial life described in *Cranford* are drowned in its wide-embracing humanity. An old-time fragrance emanates from the memory of it; an old-world flavour of lavender, rosemary, and sweet basil mingled with kind and gentle personalities. Just as we solace ourselves with it, so we feel that Mrs Gaskell solaced herself. *Cranford* alone amongst her writings did she re-read, because she was nurtured in the environment of *Cranford*. She captured the spirits of Miss Matty, Miss Pole, and the Hon. Mrs Jamieson as they passed before her. She made her escape into her own true world.

The lack of form in *Cranford*, imposed by the conditions under which it was written as

'papers', is atoned for by its spontaneity; indeed this lack of constraint forges a union of spirit that makes the book one harmonious gesture.

There is a grace of movement and a pleasant flow which is difficult to define. Her delivery is generally so equable that it flows through our ears as the fragrance of lavender passes the nostrils, or the Iris sky-blue meets the eye. Occasionally she jars upon the ear. From chapter III we cite a passage wherein the ambiguous use of a pronoun is decidedly unpleasant:

> I had once or twice tried, on such occasions, to prevail on Miss Matty to stay, and had succeeded in her sister's lifetime. I held up a screen, and did not look, and, as she said, she tried not to make the noise very offensive; but now that she was left alone, she seemed quite horrified when I begged her to remain with me in the warm dining-parlour, and enjoy her orange as she liked best. And so it was in everything. Miss Jenkyn's rules were made more stringent than ever, because the framer of them was gone where there could be no appeal. In all things else Miss Matilda was meek and undecided to a fault. I have heard Fanny turn her round twenty times in a morning about dinner, just as the little hussy chose; and

> I sometimes fancy she worked on Miss Matilda's weakness in order to bewilder her, and to make her feel more in the power of her clever servant. I determined that I would not leave her until I had seen what sort of a person Martha was; and, if I found her trustworthy, I would tell her not to trouble her mistress with every little decision.

Mrs Gaskell, as Mary Smith—the supposed narratress, sinned in another way; she was hopeless as a chronologist. She made Miss Matty, even with 'grave emphasis', untruthful. On the day that she heard Mr Holbrook read (sometime in or after June, 1849)[1] *Locksley Hall* 'so like that beautiful poem of Dr Johnson's my sister used to read'—she declared that she was not yet fifty-two (ch. IV. p. 43). She is said to have been an old lady of fifty-eight (ch. XIV, p. 158) when the bank failed. However, Miss Smith wrote to Peter *after* Lady Glenmire's marriage and the bank failure (ch. XIV, p. 154), and Peter returned a year after—naturally before *Cranford* was published in 1853! Miss Matty was therefore either fifty-five or fifty-nine in 1853, was born in 1794 or 1798, twenty

[1] Ch. IV, pp. 41-2, and 47. Mr Holbrook ordered Tennyson's after seeing a Review of them in *Blackwood* (vol. LXV, April 1849, p. 453).

or twenty-four years after her parents' marriage (ch. V, p. 52), and was a good deal younger than Deborah. Peter was either uncommonly precocious and tall for his age, six or ten in 1805 (ch. V, pp. 57 and 59), since he was younger than Miss Matty, or else he was older than Miss Matty—who was evidently as forgetful as Mary Smith was imaginative! By the way, news travelled slowly in Cranford. Mrs Forrester refers, long after 1842, to the Catholic Emancipation Bill, passed in 1829, as a recent event! (ch. VIII, p. 94).[1]

No more need be said about vivisection, and as to the ambiguous passage—the style is the whole, not a detached fragment; it is an impression, not a quotation.

Mrs Gaskell could face posterity with *Cranford* alone, just as Dickens and Thackeray would have survived with *Pickwick* and *Vanity Fair*. We cannot judge a lady's health by her venial sins; taken as a whole, there is no canker in her fragrant posy to spoil the beauty of her budding name.

[1] The page numbers, in parentheses, refer to the 'Knutsford' edition of *Cranford* (Murray, 1920).

## *Chapter VI*

## *RUTH, OR CHRISTIANITY AND THE CASUISTICAL LIE*

'Let those of us cast the first stone who can take oath that in their own morality there is no casuistry.'

RUTH was a pretty seamstress, betrayed and forsaken by a young man (Bellingham) of means. Mr Benson, a dissenting minister, and his sister shelter her, and to cover her shame she tells a casuistical lie and passes as a widow. But her offence and Benson's help in hiding her deceit lead to an awful retribution. The minister's congregation, headed by a pompous manufacturer named Bradshaw, turn upon him. During an outbreak of typhoid Ruth becomes a nurse and by a cantrip of fate tends her seducer, ill with typhus. She is herself infected and nemesis awards her death.

Here we have the beginnings of the psychological novel which became almost an obsession

with George Eliot ; in which we get that analysis of motive which is the prelude to the modern problem novel. A tempting speculation is that there was an unconscious note in *Ruth* which was later to be echoed in Hardy's *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*. On the threshold of life Ruth met the wrong man. Her life, like that of Tess, was something of a degrading ordeal and she, too, was a victim of circumstances. The Bensons alone were her beneficent providence.

To us it seems strange how a simple and casuistical lie became the cause of much misery to so many people. It is hard to regard Ruth's youthful folly as an unmitigated sin, but we must accept Mrs Gaskell's representation of a not uncharacteristic attitude of her contemporaries towards such matters. *Ruth* was withdrawn from certain London circulating libraries as being unfit for family reading. *Sharpe's London Magazine*[1] decided that the subject was not one for a novel, and protested against such a book being received into the family circle —where 'it would be the certain uprooting of the very *innocence* which is so frequently dwelt

[1] Jan. 1853, p. 126.

upon by the author with pleasure and delight'. To Mrs Gaskell, who often closed her Victorian eyes, it appeared strange that so many '*women* infinitely more than men' should disapprove of what she had written 'and express that disapproval at considerable pains to themselves, rather than allow a "demoralizing laxity" to go unchecked'.[1] Things became more than strange when two persons who sat next to her in chapel burnt their copies of *Ruth*. The long and short of the criticism of those times shows us that the triumph of virtue was not a subject to be talked of before Victorian youths and maidens, since it might have aroused in them an interest in vice. Our great grandparents were confronted by a novel in which it was difficult for most of them to see what was wrong and what was right, and with characteristic honesty they made the improper choice; that is—they gave no one in the book the credit of doing the right thing. Indeed, upon consideration, the wonder is that Mrs Gaskell did not—if she did not—expect her

[1] Mrs Gaskell, in a letter to Mrs Anna Jameson (1794-1860), March 7th, 1853. (Unpublished.)

book to be greeted by an infralapsarian outburst worthy of the occupants of tawdry Zions and rabble Bethels, whose doors are ever closed upon the pathetic amenities of life. And what did she think of the burners of *Ruth*—whom God beautifully denied the ability to follow her reasoning? However, the pharisaical prude and the Manichaean ascetic are ever with us, and the antagonistic trump which greeted *Ruth* was blown again upon the appearance of *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*.

In *Ruth*, then, Mrs Gaskell poked her finger in the pie of gossiping morality. She looked squarely at what the crowd dare not face, and as regards her heroine, like Francis Bacon, she would have believed in herself when no one else believed her. In attempting to tackle the problem of chastity, she soared beyond the social fabric of her time. She did not allow the public to dictate to her; she intensified her own personality and made her characters live in thought. She was never urbanely satisfied with things like some of her compeers. She saw the element of caprice in life and presented it to the reader.

Where Victor Hugo, Goethe, and Hardy have succeeded, Mrs Gaskell could hardly be expected to triumph. Her book is very unconvincing in parts. It is inconceivable that a pretty seamstress of sixteen working in a common dressmaker's shop should be ignorant of sexual love, and more remarkable that, having made an illicit connexion she should not know until some time afterwards that her new mode of life was irregular. And in the same pages that the novelist makes her heroine innocent and ignorant of her irregularities, we are asked to believe that she is mentally superior to and more perceptive than her fellow workers. However, convention requires us to believe that chastity—innocence of illegal sexual intercourse—is a virtue present in all members of the female sex. Mrs Gaskell does not challenge this idea, although in her heart she felt that Ruth was 'chaste'. Like Lydia Bennet in *Pride and Prejudice*, Ruth is a 'victim' and her undoer an unprincipled profligate. Strangely enough her departure with Bellingham is not painted in *too* deterrent colours. But we forget that *Ruth* did not realize that she was a bad,

naughty girl until a little boy told her that 'mamma said so' (chap. VI). The truth seems to be that in pondering over her plot, Mrs Gaskell lost herself in thought and fell between lack of courage and convention. The dawn of realism was before her eyes; she felt it more strongly when she came to write *Sylvia's Lovers*, but she was afraid of breaking away from the doctrine of the irretrievable approved by Dickens in *David Copperfield* and later sternly proclaimed by George Eliot in *Adam Bede* (Hetty Sorrel). However, she was trying to find a way out other than the sombre exit, offered by Goldsmith to folly's daughters, of wringing their bosoms and dying. Mrs Gaskell saw the difficulty of making a plea for the ethical integrity of a girl afflicted by legal unchastity. The problem as to whether the individual should suffer under laws which remain good for the community as a whole, is still, and is likely to remain, with us. She groped about for a solution which was not forthcoming, and in the end she had to kill her heroine. Her essay was not over cautious for a minister's wife; a similar book published to-day would

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be called prudish. And it is well to remind those who pluck the fiddle of Mrs Grundy that Miss Brontë threw Rochester's wife into the flames in order that Jane might marry him! Otherwise she would have had to make Jane unchaste or destroy her passion! It is unfair to condemn Mrs Gaskell where the fiery passion player of Haworth feared to tread. Mrs Gaskell saw that the law masks many ill conditions, but would she have held that the tolerant views of modern novelists indicate moral progress or moral laxity? After all the moderns are sexual anarchists, not sexual lawyers.

Let us turn aside from the moral aspect and consider the book as a charming narrative of character and scenic sketches, for it is in this more pleasant guise that *Ruth* makes its appeal to the modern reader. George Eliot, who deprecated the work as a novel, was one of the earliest personal critics to appreciate the finish and fulness of its refreshing style. She esteemed the rich humour of Sally, and the sly satire in the description of Mr Bradshaw. Sally, the rugged old servant, is delightful and skilfully drawn. Charlotte Brontë thought her 'an

apple of gold deserving to be set in a picture of silver'. Here is Sally on her lovers :

> Well, you see, I don't know as I should call them sweethearts ; for excepting John Rawson, who was shut up in a madhouse next week, I never had what you may call a downright offer of marriage but once. But I had once ; and so I may say I had a sweetheart. I was beginning to be afeard though, for one likes to be axed ; that's but civility ; and I remember, after I had turned forty, and afore Jeremiah Dixon had spoken, I began to think John Rawson had perhaps not been so very mad, and that I'd done ill to lightly his offer, as a madman's, if it was to be the only one I was ever to have ; I don't mean as I'd have had him, but I thought if it was to come o'er again, I'd speak respectful of him to folk, and say it were only his way to go about on all-fours, but that he was a sensible man in most things.

Jeremiah Dixon clears his throat uncommon loud and Sally spreads her duster and shuts her eyes all ready, but when nothing comes of it she opens them a little bit to see what he is about.

> 'My word ! if there he wasn't down on his knees right facing me. . . . At last he says, says he, "Sally, will you oblige me with your hand ? " So I thought it were, maybe, Methodee fashion to pray hand in hand ; and I'll not deny but I wished I'd washed

it better after blackleading the kitchen fire. . . . "Master Dixon, you shall have it, and welcome, if I may just go and wash 'em first." But, says he, "My dear Sally, dirty or clean, it's all the same to me, seeing I'm only speaking in a figuring way." . . . "Master Dixon, I'm obleeged to you for the compliment, and thank ye all the same, but I think I'd prefer a single life". . . . "Think again, Sally. I've a four-roomed house, and furniture comformable; and eighty pound a year. You may never have such a chance again." There were truth enough in that, but it was not pretty in the man to say it; and it put me up a bit. "As for that neither you nor I can tell, Master Dixon. You're not the first as I've had down on his knees afore me, axing me to marry him (you see I were thinking of John Rawson, only I thought there were no need to say he were on all-fours—it were truth he were on his knees, you know) and maybe you'll not be the last".' [1]

If Jane Austen had read *Dombey and Son* and *Hard Times*, or heard of Mr Pecksniff and Mr Bounderby, she might have produced Mr Bradshaw. This is one way of appreciating an unctuous dissenter—a species for which Mrs Gaskell had a sneaking dislike. It may, of course, be argued that there is no satire in the portrait of Mr Bradshaw; this view is difficult

[1] Ch. XVI.

in the after-light of *Wives and Daughters*. In any case it is necessarily subtle. The poor gentleman suffered from pathological—not conventional—self-righteousness linked up with a general horror of vice (remember his action towards his own son). His daughter, Jemima, whom Sir Adolphus Ward calls 'a delightful picture of a pure and happy nature,' is somewhat priggish. No sooner has she suspected Ruth's secret than her jealousy is gone—

> She knew not how or where. She might shun and recoil from Ruth, but she now thought that she could never more be jealous of her. *In her pride of innocence, she felt almost ashamed that such a feeling could have had existence.* (Our italics.)[1]

The character of Thurstan Benson is very lovable. When his sister is concerned about Ruth's 'miserable offspring of sin' he reproves her for confusing the consequences with the sin;[2] when he fears that she may be running short of money he writes 'take my Facciolati to Johnson's, he will advance upon it; it is in the third row, bottom shelf'. [108].

The description of the pestilence spreading

[1] Ch. XXV, p. 323 (Knutsford edn.). [2] P. 120.

over Eccleston, in chapter XXXIII, and of Ruth's untiring energy in tending the fever stricken, is almost an anticipation of Sister Dora and her work. Florence Nightingale thought highly of it, and her testimony to *Ruth* must have given pleasure to Mrs Gaskell.

The descriptive passages of the book are very harmonious, and in one at least the name Tess might be substituted for Ruth ; it is essentially Hardyesque :

> Ruth went on her way, all unconscious of the dark phantoms of the future that were gathering around her ; her melancholy turned, with the pliancy of childish years, at sixteen not yet lost, into a softened manner which was infinitely charming. By-and-by she cleared up into sunny happiness. The evening was still and full of mellow light, and the new-born summer was so delicious that, in common with all young creatures, she shared its influence and was glad.
>
> They stood together at the top of a steep ascent, "the hill" of the hundred. At the summit there was a level space, sixty or seventy yards square, of unenclosed and broken ground, over which the golden bloom of the gorse cast a rich hue, while its delicious scent perfumed the fresh and nimble air. On one side of this common, the ground sloped down to a clear bright pond, in which were mirrored the rough sand cliffs that rose abrupt on the opposite bank ;

hundreds of martins found a home there, and were now wheeling over the transparent water, and dipping in their wings in their evening sport. . . . Ruth and Mr Bellingham plunged through the broken ground to regain the road near the wayside inn. Hand-in-hand, now pricked by the far-spreading gorse, now ankle-deep in sand; now pressing the soft thick heath, and now over wild thyme and other fragrant herbs, they made their way with many a merry laugh. . . .

When first they stopped, silent with sighing pleasure, the air seemed full of pleasant noises; distant church-bells made harmonious music with the little singing-birds near at hand; nor were the lowings of the cattle nor the calls of the farm-servants discordant, for the voices seemed to be hushed by the brooding consciousness of the Sabbath. They stood loitering before the house, quietly enjoying the view. The clock in the little inn struck eight, and it sounded clear and sharp in the stillness.

"Can it be so late?" asked Ruth. . . .[1]

Churton Collins once called Tennyson a classic in fragments. It is not inappropriate to call fragments of *Ruth* classical. As a thing complete in itself *Ruth* is a failure. Mrs Gaskell approached her subject in a candid, tolerant, and liberal spirit, but the prejudices of the age in which she lived would not allow her to sound the question

[1] Ch. IV.

to the bottom. She has left it on record that so great was her anxiety over *Ruth* that she lost her own power of judging and could not tell whether she had done it well or ill.[1] The novelist went astray when she made Benson turn the wheel of Destiny in the wrong direction; she should have endowed him with the courage of his convictions and made him brave public opinion, in a cause which he believed to be right. Mrs Gaskell could have rectified this mistake by making Ruth tell the truth after her meeting with Mr Donne (alias Bellingham) on the seashore at Abermouth. Ruth summed up sufficient moral courage not to marry her seducer, failed to tell the truth at the right moment, and waited until the discovery of her falsehood. Mrs Gaskell labours over-muchly to excite our sympathies for her heroine whom, doubtless, she intended to be 'Psyche in the purifying fires of ordinary life'. She meant well; she tried to convey a theory of morality purging error by internal redemption, and she demanded a single standard of purity for both

[1] In a letter to Monckton Milnes (Lord Houghton) dated 10 Feb. [1853]. See p. 481, vol. I, of Reid's *Monckton Milnes* 1891).

men and women. Her ideas and intentions were good, but the embodiment in which she presents them remains an unsuccessful attempt to delineate passions with which hardly any writer could have dared to grapple in her day.

## *Chapter VII*

### *MRS GASKELL AS BIOGRAPHER*[1]

> 'There is a kind of character in thy life,
> That to th' observer doth thy history
> Fully unfold.'
>
> —*Measure for Measure*, Act I, Sc. I, 1, 29.

*The Life of Charlotte Brontë* seems excessively interesting. It leads us to consider whether its creator sacrificed the truth to her unconscious desire to paint a picture. The true answer is that Charlotte Brontë was too striking a person to admit of any broad mistakes in her outline. That Mrs Gaskell erred in several details is undeniable; that as an artist she called to mind the etchings of Rembrandt is true; that at the time she wrote she believed in her own story is incontestable. All biographers err in detail; if they are good artists they use light and shade to their best advantage, and

[1] See *ante*, pp. 44-45 and 49.

many of them trust to hearsay and the testimonies of their subject's friends. Mrs Gaskell tried to tell the truth.

> The difficulty that presented itself most strongly to me, when I first had the honour of being requested to write this biography, was how I could show what a noble, true, and tender woman Charlotte Brontë really was, without mingling up with her life too much of the personal history of her nearest and most intimate friends. After much consideration of this point, I came to the resolution of writing truly, if I wrote at all ; of withholding nothing, though some things, from their very nature, could not be spoken of so fully as others.[1]

Yet she realized too that she had to trust to her sense of atmospheric effects. What an ado if someone discovered if this little fact, or that little thing was wrong! After all the one important thing was that the general impressions should be true ; that she should paint a picture. How far she succeeded time has shown. The narrowness of contemporary prejudice has been expanded to a larger wisdom. The footnotes of subsequent critics of the *Life* may be useful and interesting, none the less footnotes

[1] *Life*, vol. II, ch. XII, p. 273.

they remain. These discoveries have added little of importance to one of the best literary biographies in our language. Indeed they tend to deepen our admiration for the sympathetic discernment and skilful brushwork of Mrs Gaskell. The Héger letters may have heightened the romance in Miss Brontë's life. Mrs Gaskell knew of their existence, but from a sense of delicacy and nearness to events she probably felt bound to omit all mention of her friend's unrequited *amourette*. (As far back as 1854 Catherine Winkworth guessed that 'the true love was Paul Emanuel'.) Again, there was no reason why the obscurities in Charlotte's real life should be clear in her biography.

It is not our intention to stir up the veritable hornets' nest into which Mrs Gaskell unwittingly inveigled herself in the first edition of her biography. Many pages have been written on the subject of the Cowan Bridge School and the Rev. Carus Wilson,[1] the girl who was seduced

[1] Time has shown that a correspondent to *The Times* was a shrewd observer when he wrote: 'It remains true, no doubt, that Mr Shepheard and Mrs Gaskell formed different estimates of the merits of the school and its founder. So, probably, do the

but whose relatives were satisfied by the translation of that word into 'betrayed', and the supposed 'affair' between Branwell Brontë and Mrs Robinson. Suffice it to say here, that the biographer withdrew her statements about this lady and Charlotte's brother, although the former never 'entertained a doubt that the statements of Mrs Gaskell were . . . made upon the information which at the time Mrs Gaskell believed to be well founded'.[1]

That Mrs Gaskell felt keenly these annoyances and worries is shown in the following extract from a letter written by her to Fairbairn, the distinguished engineer:

> I have had a preface to my (forthcoming) third edition sent to me, which I dare not insert there; but it is for good to be lost, therefore I shall copy it out for you:
>
> "If anybody is displeased with any statement in this book, they are requested to believe it with-

pupils whom they have respectively consulted. I have merely sought to show from the book itself, for I have no other sources of information at hand, that Mr Shepheard has singularly misunderstood the tone and bearing of the narration, and that Mrs Gaskell, whether mistaken or correct in her results, has gone into the question with great fairness, conscientiousness, and care.' [by E. S.] *Times*, June 3, 1857, p. 9 (col. 2).

[1] See a letter from Mrs Robinson's solicitors in *The Times*, May 30, 1857 (p. 5, col. 2).

drawn, and my deep regret expressed for its insertion, as truth is too expensive an article to be laid before the British public.

But for the future I intend to confine myself to lies (*i.e.* fiction). It is safer."

(Date probably June, 1857.)

There is a frontispiece to one of the two volumes of the first edition of *The Life of Charlotte Brontë* which haunts the memory. It is an engraving of Haworth Church and parsonage. In the left-hand corner of the picture are two words signifying that E. C. Gaskell 'drew this'. This drawing is the life of Charlotte Brontë: There we see the grey stones, and the tombstones, the moorland solitude and the wuthering heights 'grand from the loneliness which they suggest, or oppressive from the feeling which they give of being pent-up by some monotonous and illimitable barrier, according to the mood of mind in which the spectator may be'. And so the vista of realistic agony is unfolded. From the onset we see the aspects of nature and environment which coloured her life, we can almost measure the sadness with which it was filled, we see ranged against her irresistible

forces, and conjured up before our mind's eye are the memories which remained in her as a fitful cause of dejection, the few happy meetings with 'dear E' and Mrs Gaskell, and the Belgium days; merely opiates to the incurable sadness of her life.

It is this power of conveying life itself which makes for permanence in Mrs Gaskell's biography. We read her book and the characters are with us; the old parson, the three sisters, the servants —Tabby and Martha, the little cat that died, and the faithful old dog Keeper who loved to steal upstairs and stretch his tawny limbs on the spotless beds. We live again with them all. We *understand* when Mrs Gaskell records Charlotte's precise 'Our little cat is dead. Emily is sorry'. That is judgment by singleness of sight and hearing. 'Emily is sorry'; sorrow from a wild heart; the wild winds of Haworth are sometimes calm; and there is sometimes light in the wild eyes of Branwell. It is this pathetic sympathy for her characters that makes Mrs Gaskell's *Life* a great book; great in all its simplicity. Keeper is with us again:

Let us somehow hope that he follows Emily now ; and when he rests, sleeps on some soft white bed of dreams, unpunished when he awakens to the life of the land of shadows.

The following quotation is characteristic ; it shows Mrs Gaskell's sense of the pathetic and tragic harmony of Charlotte Brontë's life :

The hours of retiring for the night had always been early in the parsonage. Now family prayers were at eight o'clock ; directly after which Mr Brontë and old Tabby went to bed, and Martha was not long in following. But Charlotte could not have slept if she had gone—could not have rested on her desolate couch. She stopped up—it was very tempting—later and later, striving to beguile the lonely night with some employment, till her weak eyes failed to read or sew, and could only weep in solitude over the dead that were not. No one on earth can even imagine what those hours were to her. All the grim superstitions of the North had been implanted in her during her childhood by the servants who believed in them. They recurred to her now—with no shrinking from the spirits of the Dead, but with such an intense longing once more to stand face to face with the souls of her sisters as no one but she could have felt. It seemed as if the very strength of her yearning should have compelled them to appear. On windy nights, cries, and sobs, and wailings seemed to go round the house, as of the dearly-beloved striving to force their way to her.

'Nothing in the world is more difficult than to describe a man', said Raleigh, and perhaps only genius can catch the vapour of genius. Mrs Gaskell's book is not faultless.[1] Biographers may give their readers truthfulness of impression, though they cannot present them with accuracy of detail. Mrs Gaskell realized that the primary function of a biographer is to present her characters objectively. She saw that Charlotte Brontë's letters were self-revealing and she made them her chief source. She knew how to master her material, and that is why her book, though slighter, is worthy of a place beside Boswell's *Johnson*, and Lockhart's *Scott*.

The best praise of all is simple: Mrs Gaskell presented the particular being she had in view, and those who knew Charlotte Brontë recognized her picture.

[1] There are several passages that one would gladly cut away; that quotation (ch. XXVI) from Miss Martineau for example: 'I did *not* consider the book a coarse one, though I could not answer for it that there were no traits which, on a second leisurely reading, I might not dislike on that ground.'

## *Chapter VIII*

## *SYLVIA'S LOVERS*

'Still nursing the unconquerable hope.'

SOMETHING has been said of the way in which *Sylvia's Lovers* was produced.[1] To some extent Mrs Gaskell had become famous by *Mary Barton* and her exquisite contributions to periodicals; but she desired, perhaps, to write a work of fiction less ephemeral; something less in the nature of a sermon and more as a work of art. The Viking blood stirred in her veins, and that, together with a peep at her first love Crabbe,[2] paved the way to *Sylvia's Lovers*. It was only natural that a lover of sea-voyages—whose only brother disappeared at sea and whose father wrote a book on discovery and navigation[3]—with an interest in maritime discovery,

[1] See *ante*, pp. 65-66. [2] See Crabbe's *Ruth*, 'Fix'd was the day', etc. [3] *Historical Sketch of Discovery, Navigation*, and *Commerce*, by Wm. Stevenson. Demy 8vo. 1825 (viii + 656 pp.).

an avidity for the stones of the great navigators, a sea ancestry, and a facile pen, should conjure up the ocean winds.

*Sylvia's Lovers* gave its author more trouble than any other of her books, and demanded more thought than had been needful for its predecessors. Mrs Gaskell must have read very carefully books like Young's *History of Whitby* (1817), and *Northern Whale Fishery* by William Scorseby of Whitby, whose father was a speck-sioneer. She was engaged upon her semi-historical novel for several years, and the good results of this slow preparation are noticeable. The theme of the book is more masterly than that of any other used by the novelist. There are no jerks from grand historical events to the personal adventures of her characters. This feature is present only in great novels. In novels by lesser artists these 'jars' are invariably perceptible. There is a unity of vision throughout the book. We look at the period presented to us, because it is intensely human. It is perhaps worth noting, by way of contrast, that even after reading a great book like *Esmond* we are inclined to view it externally and

say 'What a clever reproduction of the period'.

Kinraid, Sylvia, Robson, and Old Kester are almost as much the outcome of their surroundings as are the characters in a novel by Hardy. Like the Wessex Novelist, although less consciously, Mrs Gaskell expresses the power of environment, and she seems to point out, in agreement with him, that exodus from natural environment usually spells tragedy. The ceaseless moan of the tide will not out of our ears; we feel the articulation of the waves floating on the air, so subtle and real is its relation to the actors in the drama. The irresponsible factors, environment and temperament, seem blended to pursue that destined end. Then again the keynote of her novel is pity, and her attitude is one of philosophic fatalism. It is something like Stoicism without frigidity. These aspects are Hardyesque.

*Sylvia's Lovers* undoubtedly presents psychological problems, but its authoress, unlike writers of to-day, does not content herself with observing gestures or dissecting characters. She shows her characters at grips with their destiny. They are revealed by their actions. She was

right. After all, purely psychological novels are merely super-natural. We can see naturalism in our daily lives and to present *that* is not enough. Mrs Gaskell made her stand somewhere between the naturalistic and the psychological novel, and gave us something approaching realism, life slightly idealized. And a good novel is an ideal presentiment of something ; fancy's child.

The locale of *Sylvia's Lovers* is Monkshaven, which has been identified with Whitby. Indeed, Mrs Gaskell's description of the old town, with its surrounding moorland and purple crags towering high above the level of the sea, was so faithful that when Du Maurier was asked to illustrate the novel he went immediately to a portfolio which contained views of the Yorkshire fishery town.

> Somehow in this country sea-thoughts followed the thinker far inland ; whereas in most other parts of the island, at five miles from the ocean, he has all but forgotten the existence of such an element of salt water. The great Greenland trade of the coasting towns was the main and primary cause of this, no doubt. But there was also a tread and an irritation in everyone's mind, at the time of which I write, in connection with the neighbouring sea.[1]

[1] Ch. I.

The novelist follows up her account of Monkshaven and this foreboding hint, with a description of the navy impressment system which was to play a part in the third, fifth, eighteenth and twenty-third chapters of her book.[1] Her picture of the system is adequate. There is no overdrawn detail in its history, any more than there is in her sketches of scenery and costume.

Sylvia, the delightful heroine of the book, is first introduced to us on the way to Monkshaven, where she is going with a friend to sell butter and eggs. Her father was a small farmer, who in his earlier years had been a specksioneer. He is rude, self-willed, and stubborn unto death, and there is a touch of the Mayor of Casterbridge in his character. He is one of those men who, if he heard a man say it was a fine day, would try to find out that it was no such thing. But withal he is a man of courage and sympathy. Remember how he saved the poor cow who was dancing about in the roar, and dazzle, and heat of the fire. His pretended contempt for

[1] The historical fidelity of Mrs Gaskell's description of the working of the press gang may be tested by a comparison of her exposition of the system with ch. XIII (pp. 218-19) of Professor Ramsay Muir's *History of Liverpool*. 1907.

women and his practical dependence upon them is well brought out in the book.

> "Women's well enough in their way", said Daniel, in a philosophizing tone, "but a man may have too much on 'em. Now there's me, leg fast these four days, and a'll make free to say to yo', a'd rather a deal ha' been loading dung i' t' wettest weather; an' a reckon it's the' being wi' nought but women as tires me so; they talk so foolish it gets int' t' bones like."[1]

This is just what we expect from a man who was wed in brass buttons, and who'd wear brass buttons to his death; and if anyone moithered him, he'd wear brass buttons in his coffin! Poor Robson was hanged for his resistance to the press gang. In presenting Daniel Robson and his faithful old servant Kester, Mrs Gaskell showed her thorough intimacy with folk-life; that same understanding which we find in Hardy.

Let us return to Sylvia and her friend Molly Corney, who arrive at Monkshaven in time to see the first appearance of a whaler from Greenland.

[1] Ch. V.

It was a pretty scene though it was too familiar to the eyes of all who then saw it for them to notice its beauty. The sun was low enough in the west to turn the mist that filled the distant valley of the river into golden haze. Above, on either bank of the Dee, there lay the moorland heights swelling one behind the other ; the nearer russet brown with the tints of the faded bracken ; the more distant, gray and dim against the rich autumnal sky. The red and fluted tiles of the gabled houses rose in crowded irregularity on one side of the river, while the newer suburb was built in more orderly and less picturesque fashion on the opposite cliff. The river itself was swelling and chafing with the incoming tide till its vexed waters rushed over the very feet of the watching crowd on the staithes, as the great sea waves encroached more and more every minute. The quay-side was unsavourily ornamented with glittering fish scales, for the hauls of fish were cleansed in the open air, and no sanitary arrangements existed for sweeping away any of the relics of this operation.

The fresh, salt breeze was bringing up the lashing, leaping tide from the blue sea beyond the bar. Behind the returning girls there rocked the white-sailed ship, as if she were all alive with eagerness for her anchors to be heaved.

How impatient her crew of beating hearts were for that moment, how those on land sickened at the suspense, may be imagined, when you remember that for six long summer months those sailors had been as if dead from all news of those they loved ; shut

up in terrible, dreary, Arctic seas from the hungry sight of sweethearts and friends, wives and mothers. No one knew what might have happened. The crowd on shore grew silent and solemn before the dread of the possible news of death that might toll in upon their hearts with this up-rushing tide. The whalers went out into the Greenland seas full of strong, hopeful men; but the whalers never returned as they sailed forth. . . . Many a heart swelled with passionate, unspoken fear, as the first whaler lay off the bar on her return voyage.[1]

The sailing ship numbered amongst its crew Molly's cousin, Charley Kinraid, who afterwards falls in love with Sylvia:

Kinraid followed the light—his light—into the icy chill of the dairy, where the bright polished tin cans were quickly dimmed with the warm sweet-smelling milk, that Sylvia was emptying into the brown pans. In his haste to help her, Charley took up one of the pails.

"Eh! that'n 's to be strained. Yo' have a' the cow's hair in. Mother's very particular, and cannot abide a hair."

So she went over to her awkward dairymaid, and before she—but not before he—was aware of the sweet proximity, she was adjusting his happy awkward arms to the new office of holding a milk-strainer over the bowl, and pouring the white liquid through it.

[1] Ch. II.

"There!" said she, looking up for a moment, and half blushing, "now yo'll know how to do it next time."

"I wish next time was to come now", said Kinraid, but she had returned to her own pail, and seemed not to hear him. He followed her to her side of the dairy. "I've but a short memory, can yo' not show me again how t' hold t' strainer?"[1]

But there was another lover in the case—detestable and disagreeable Philip Hepburn, who loved not wisely but too well—whom Sylvia hated. Hepburn insinuated evil stories against his rival; one motive alone which should have earned him failure in his suit for Sylvia's hand. But he was not content with sly hints about his rival's character. When he saw the press-gang seeking for Kinraid, he did not take the opportunity of warning him, and so was largely instrumental in his capture. But the irony of the situation was that Kinraid's fortune should be made through the tyrannical press gang. Later Hepburn holds his peace about a message which Kinraid sent for Sylvia. It is true that he half believed Kinraid dead, but was that sufficient justification for his withholding the

[1] Ch. XV.

loving message which would have eased Sylvia's heart? No, he was a selfish opportunist, too pious, proper, and precise on his own side.

Sylvia's weak point was when, with her heart yearning for Kinraid, she consented to marry Hepburn. Though even then Hepburn was to blame, for when old Kester suggested that there was a chance of Kinraid's being alive, Philip growled out that he was 'a damned fool' (By the way, do Quakers swear?).

> "Oh, Philip, think yo' there's just one chance?"
> "Ay, there's a chance, sure enough", said Philip, cruelly adding:
> "Kester may say next as there's a chance as your father is not dead, because we none of us saw him"—

and he nearly added 'hung'. It may be said that Sylvia married Hepburn for the sake of her mother and a home, but would she have married him with the knowledge of his deceit? Perhaps. She was fickle and somewhat shallow, and her remark about Charley, to the effect that Hepburn would not have gone and married another woman so soon after hearing that she was married if he had been in the sailor's place, was unjust. Yet somehow we cannot help

but love her for her faults and her fickleness; very human after all. Philip pays for his ill-deeds and our sympathy is drawn towards him in his last, Wolsey-like cry:

> "I ha' made thee my idol; and if I could live my life over again, I would love my God more, and thee less; and then I shouldn't ha' sinned this sin against thee."

It is hard to believe that the authoress of *Cranford* wrote *Sylvia's Lovers*. It is a long way from the pleasant cackle of a village to 'the great wave that echoes round the world'. But in *Sylvia's Lovers* not for one moment does Mrs Gaskell have the air of one disporting herself in an alien element. Her success in vigorous dramatic action—a departure from her usual methods—is remarkable. The movement of the story advances simply and truthfully towards tragedy. Not until nearly the end of her story does Mrs Gaskell loose herself in a conception which seems to have been just beyond her powers, and become hasty, restless, and melodramatic. However, we must not be blind to the fact that in Mrs Gaskell's day some sort of a happy ending to a novel was deemed necessary;

marriage or something equally divine or provident! It is easy to find the false notes and miss the diapason which unifies the book. The plot is somewhat like that of a Greek drama wherein the characters struggle with a fate (? instinct) which they never elude. *Sylvia's Lovers* is a kind of prelude to the idea which Mr Hardy renewed in the 'nineties with intensity and philosophic precision. The tear that rises from the heart is mighty. What is more impressive than the archetype of sorrow symbolized here by Sylvia and Hepburn, voicing the tragic muse?

The summation of impressions left by *Sylvia's Lovers* is of the sad irony of things here. But the book ends with a note of hope; hope of a re-adjustment of things in a life to come.

> 'Oh for Thy voice to soothe and bless!
> What hope of answer, or redress?
> Behind the veil! Behind the veil!'

was the motto, from Tennyson, which Mrs Gaskell prefixed to her tale of Sylvia and her lovers, and such was the burden of the story in which she has distilled her sweet essence from ths shadowy beauty of mankind.

## *Chapter IX*

## *THE IRONIC VEIN (WIVES AND DAUGHTERS)*

THE building up of *Wives and Daughters* was the labour and pleasure of Mrs Gaskell's last years, into which she poured her choice and youthful memories. Nowhere else does she show so clearly her gift for interpreting character and creating situations with such evenness of tone. This is all the more remarkable inasmuch as the chapters were written in various places under varied circumstances, and she did not outline the plot beforehand, but planned her story as she wrote. As a specimen of adequate dove-tailing, *Wives and Daughters* is unequalled in our literature. The consequence of this method of construction is that the development is a sequence rather than an organic growth.

Connop Thirwall[1] thought it one of the most delightful specimens of the still-life novels he had ever read; this unobtrusive ease and quiet distinction reminds us of Trollope. Mrs Gaskell achieves a pleasant effect like the Barchester novelist, but in itself inimitable. Quiet comedy and irony walk hand-in-hand through her radiant and alert pages, and there is a verity in their presentation which would have delighted Jane Austen. Indeed, Mrs Gaskell's aim was fidelity to the life described, her art a vivid presentment of her characters, and so long as we have *Wives and Daughters* the domestic spirit of the Victorian Age—with its manners, modes and eccentricities —will be with us. This power of presenting in a charming manner the characters of ordinary life, the domestic aspect, is one of the most difficult to treat adequately, and in this she succeeds. But Mrs Gaskell's personages, unlike Miss Austen's, are not confined to their own sphere. There is a feeling that Miss Austen's characters have no existence outside their own society. We see in her the placid spinster

[1] *Letters to a Friend*, by Thirwall, ed. A. P. Stanley, 1881, p. 43.

who presented inactive men (excepting, perhaps, Captain Wentworth), in Miss Brontë the passionate woman who measured men according to her nature. Mrs Gaskell paints the way between—men with their inevitable failings mixed with their virtues—true flesh and blood.

With hardly any effort at description Mrs Gaskell sets us amid healthy and rural surroundings. In homely words we are made to feel the freshness of the fields and blue sky. Although her descriptive powers are subordinate to the action, yet they are quietly and surely conveyed.

> It was a June morning, and, early as it was, the room was full of sunny warmth and light. . . . Six o'clock now ! the pleasant, brisk ringing of the church bells told that ; calling everyone to their daily work, as they had done for hundreds of years. Up jumped Molly, and ran with her bare little feet across the room, and lifted off the handkerchief and saw once again [her new] bonnet—the pledge of the gay bright day to come. Then to the window ; and, after some tugging, she opened the casement and let in the sweet morning air. The dew was already off the flowers in the garden below, but rising from the long hay-grass in the meadows directly beyond. At one side lay the little town of Hollingford, into a street of which Mr Gibson's front door opened ; and delicate columns and little puffs of smoke were already

beginning to rise from many a cottage chimney, where some housewife was already up, and preparing breakfast for the bread-winner of the family.[1]

This is our introduction to the atmosphere of the novel and to one of the most lovable heroines of fiction. Molly is the outstanding person of the book, because her inner character is drawn. Unselfish, tender, and devoted, she is somewhat like Shakespeare's Celia. Her loving-kindness benefits her friends and adorns herself. Her love, strong and selfless, makes her a tower of strength in comparison to her impulsive half-sister, Cynthia. She is a type of woman of the best kind, capable of heroism through her affections and her moral courage, and unspoiled by either spite or vulgar gossip. Even Jane Austen's Anne Elliot is narrower and weaker than Molly. There is something of a stoical resignation about her. She learnt to rejoice without envy in the happiness that she thought was not for her. Silence, love, and remembrance seemed greater to her than hope. With David Copperfield she hoped that love and truth are stronger than any real evil or misfortune in the world. She had a desire

[1] Ch. I.

to comprehend her own soul. Here she is thinking of her life to come after her best friend —her father—is stolen by his second wife :

> Thinking more of others' happiness than of her own was very fine ; but did it not mean giving up her very individuality, quenching all the warm love, the true desires, that made her herself? . . .
>
> It will be very dull when I shall have killed myself, as it were, and live only in trying to do, and to be, as other people like. I don't see any end to it. I might as well never have lived. . . .
>
> I daresay it seems foolish ; perhaps all our earthly trials will appear foolish to us after a while ; perhaps they seem so now to angels. But we are ourselves, you know, and this is *now*, not sometime to come, a long, long way off. And we are not angels, to be comforted by seeing the ends for which everything is sent.[1]

Thus Molly reveals herself. We do not merely feel the joy of the novelist in describing her. It is pleasant to know that in the end circumstances became the victim of Molly !

In contrast to Molly, Mrs Gaskell drew her half-sister Cynthia, who is joyful and forgetful, and all for the present. There is a touch of Thackeray's Beatrix in Cynthia ; she wished

[1] Ch. XI.

to be admired. Molly hit the mark when she said, apropos of her coquetry :

> ' I suppose it was a repetition of Mr Coxe ? You were agreeable—and he took it for something more.'

Cynthia is a beautiful animal, nevertheless an animal because she was a victim of circumstance. Until her mother's second marriage she had never lived with people with such a high standard of conduct as Mr Gibson and Molly, and she did not quite know how to behave in their society. Trained by a feline mother she became a kind of ' Duessa '.

> Cynthia put on all her pretty airs—her look of intent interest in what anyone was saying to her, let the subject be what it would, as if it was the thing she cared most about in the whole world ; her unspoken deference—in short, all the ways she possessed of tickling the vanity of men.[1]

There we have the result of a mother's careful training ! But in the end we have to forgive Cynthia. The quiet companionship and good influence of Molly touch her character :

> " Would you be my friend, if—if it turned out even that I had done very wrong things ? Would

[1] Ch. XXXVII.

you remember how very difficult it has sometimes been to me to act rightly?" (She took hold of Molly's hand as she spoke.) "We won't speak of Mamma, for your sake as much as mine or hers; but you must see she isn't one to help a girl with much good advice, or good—— Oh, Molly, you don't know how I was neglected, just at a time when I wanted friends most. Mamma does not know it; it is not in her to know what I might have been, if I had only fallen into wise, good hands. But I know it; and, what's more", continued she, suddenly ashamed of her unusual exhibition of feeling, "I try not to care, which I daresay is really the worst of all; but I could worry myself to death, if I once took to serious thinking."[1]

Let us lift the veil with the insidious design of farther discovery, as Miss Austen would have expressed herself, and turn to the 'Wives' of the story. Cynthia's mother, Hyacinth Clare Kirkpatrick, was the realization of a character that Mrs Gaskell hinted at in the *Moorland Cottage*—Mrs Browne. Mrs Buxton, of the same tale, was the germ of Mrs Hamley of *Wives and Daughters*. But whereas the former, drawn with a firm hand, is a major character in the book, the latter is merely a tender link of the machinery

[1] Ch. XL.

of the story. Hyacinth Clare, the second Mrs Gibson, is wily, deceitful, and affected; flatterer and toady. Only an artist could make such a vain and complacent person call up our sympathy instead of our despite, and this is done by hints as to her early struggles in life. She fixes herself in our minds as a thoroughly *benevolent* person in talking and contriving like Mrs Norris of *Mansfield Park*. But she is more than that, she is Mrs Norris joined on to Mrs Bennet with her

> mean understanding, little information, and uncertain temper. When she was discontented, she fancied herself nervous. The business of her life was to get her [daughter] married: its solace was visiting and news.[1]

We know Mrs Gibson from the moment when she says[2], 'And now darling are you ready to go?' when she had eaten up everything on the tray: the chicken, jelly, and wine sent for Molly, who could not help wishing that her future step-mother would have told her hostess that she herself had finished up the ample

[1] *Pride and Prejudice*, ch. I. [2] Ch. II.

luncheon; 'but no such idea seemed to come into her mind', and

> 'Marriage is the natural thing.' The husband has all the dirty work to do, 'and his wife sits in the drawing-room like a lady. I did when poor Kirkpatrick was alive. Heigho! It's a sad thing to be a widow.' [1]

The opening of chapter X is a model which should be adopted by all scheming women. Unfortunately it is too long to quote here. However she esteemed her first husband, and here is a specimen of that appreciation:

> When I look back to those happy days,it seems to me as if I had never valued them as I ought. To be sure—youth, love—what did we care for poverty! I remember dear Mr Kirkpatrick walking five miles into Stratford to buy me a muffin, because I had such a fancy for one after Cynthia was born. I don't mean to complain of dear papa—but I don't think—but perhaps I ought not to say it to you. If Mr Kirkpatrick had but taken care of that cough of his; but he was so obstinate! Men always are, I think. And it really was selfish of him. Only, I daresay, he did not consider the forlorn state in which I should be left. It came harder upon me than upon most people, because I always was of such an affectionate sensitive nature. I remember a little poem of Mr

[1] Ch. IX.

Kirkpatrick's, in which he compared my heart to a harp string, vibrating to the slightest breeze.

'I thought harp strings required a pretty strong finger to make them sound', said Molly. [Note her father's irony.]

'My dear child, you've no more poetry in you than your father.'[1]

We might well wonder how such a keen spirited man as Mr Gibson, the country doctor, came to marry Mrs Kirkpatrick. A man with his perception must have known from a casual acquaintanceship that she was not remarkable for unflinching morality, but then her movements were soft and sinuous. 'Altogether she looked much younger than her age, which was not far short of forty.' We must suppose that he called up his youthful memories and so threw a glamour over her character; the older than Shelleyan mistake of seeking the ever-flitting well-beloved in a mortal. The reader involuntarily exclaims 'Thank goodness that "Papa enjoys a joke at everything"', as Molly said, although he feels sure that Gibson's marriage with Clare Kirkpatrick was beyond a joke. Poor Mr Gibson had to pay for his

[1] Ch. XLI.

mistake; he was encumbered with the scheming widow for the rest of his life. Mrs Gaskell would not introduce any easy sentiment into her book; she would not kill her off. But he bore his trial with fortitude. His sense of humour was his saving grace. His wit and good nature are visible on nearly every occasion that he is presented to us. And like Molly, Cynthia, and his wife—effective illusions of life; fictitious realities—he is no mere puppet. We are never veiled from his study; it is familiar to us as are the bedrooms of Molly and Cynthia. He is just the man we expect to go out 'muttering to himself awful' to help someone and not mention that 'he had come home from a long round not half-an-hour before, a round from which he had returned dinnerless and hungry'. How, too, he enjoyed making up that prescription for his apprentice's calf-love; for Master Coxe, who had discovered that Molly's eyes were loadstars, and her dimples marks of Cupid's finger.

"I'll not be hard upon him. I'll give him a hint; he's quite sharp enough to take it. Poor laddie!

if I send him away, which would be the wisest course, I do believe he's got no home to go to."

After a little more consideration in the same strain, Mr Gibson went and sat down at the writing table and wrote the following formula :

*Master Coxe*

("That 'master' will touch him to the quick", said Mr Gibson to himself as he wrote the word.)

R. Verecundiæ ℥ı.
Fidelitatis Domesticæ ℥ı.
Reticintiæ qr. iij.

M. Capiat hanc dosim ter die in aquâ purâ.

R. Gibson, Ch.

We are told that he smiled a little sadly as he re-read his words and muttered "Poor Jeanie" (who was not so old, and how he did love her !). We know that the first Mrs Gibson's name was Mary ; so he must have been thinking of someone else !

So far then, it would appear that *Wives and Daughters* is a book of contrasts, and in this respect it is one of the forefathers of the modern psychological novel. Before passing to another aspect of the novel, the 'Cranford' phase, we must pause for a moment on the contrast between Osborne and Roger, the sons of the

irritable yet lovable Squire Hamley. Osborne is the talented and promising first-born who turns out a ne'er-do-well, frabbs his father with bills, returns home with a long face, and dies. Roger is a plodder—a kind of Charles Darwin, who never realizes his own worth; in short, a masculine Molly. He is a compound of good gifts, and there is something in his strength which reminds the reader of George Warrington. Perhaps Mrs Gaskell was wrong in designing Roger for Molly's future husband. Their sterling qualities are so much alike that it is questionable if, in reality, they would have been happy together.

In the opening sentence of this chapter we said that Mrs Gaskell called up the memories of her girlhood, and not the least of these was her remembrance of Knutsford. Hence, the re-appearance, in 1865, of the Miss Jenkyns of *Cranford* in the new guise of the sisters Browning. In the following citation, substitute Miss Deborah and Miss Matty for Miss Clarinda and Miss Phoebe Browning, and in the place of the Lady Harriet read the Hon. Mrs Jamieson. The result is another scene from *Cranford :*

Miss Phoebe was standing on the stairs, with a lighted candle in her hand, peering into the darkness to see Molly come in.

'Oh, Molly! I thought you'd never come back. Such a piece of news! Sister has gone to bed; she's had a headache—with the excitement, I think; but she says it's new bread. Come upstairs softly, my dear, and I'll tell you what it is! Who do you think has been here—drinking tea with us, too, in the most condescending manner?'

'Lady Harriet?' said Molly, suddenly enlightened by the word 'condescending'.

'Yes. Why, how did you guess it? But, after all, her call, at any rate in the first instance, was upon you. Oh, dear Molly! if you're not in a hurry to go to bed, let me sit down quietly and tell you all about it; for my heart jumps into my mouth still when I think of how I was caught. She—that is, her ladyship—left the carriage at "The George", and took to her feet to go shopping—just as you or I may have done many a time in our lives. And sister was taking her forty winks; and I was sitting with my gown up above my knees and my feet on the fender, pulling out my grandmother's lace which I'd been washing. The worst has yet to be told. I'd taken off my cap, for I thought it was getting dusk and no one would come, and there was I in my black silk skull-cap, when Nancy put her head in and whispered, "There's a lady downstairs—real grand one, by her talk"; and in there came my Lady Harriet, so sweet and pretty in her ways, it was

some time before I forgot I had never a cap on. Sister never wakened ; or never roused up, so to say. She says she thought it was Nancy bringing in the tea when she heard someone moving ; for her ladyship, as soon as she saw the state of the case, came and knelt down on the rug by me, and begged my pardon so prettily for having followed Nancy upstairs without waiting for permission ; and was so taken by my old lace, and wanted to know how I washed it, and where you were, and when you'd be back, and when the happy couple would be back : till sister wakened—she's always a little bit put out, you know, when she first wakens from her afternoon nap—and, without turning her head to see who it was, she said, quite sharp—" Buzz, buzz, buzz ! When will you learn that whispering is more fidgeting than talking out loud? I've not been able to sleep at all for the chatter you and Nancy have been keeping up all this time ". You know that was a little fancy of sister's, for she'd been snoring away as naturally as could be. So I went to her, and leant over her, and said in a low voice—

' " Sister, it's her ladyship and me that has been conversing ".

' " Ladyship here, ladyship there ! have you lost your wits, Phoebe, that you talk such nonsense—and in your skull-cap, too ! "

' By this time she was sitting up—and, looking round her, she saw Lady Harriet, in her velvets and silks, sitting on our rug, smiling, her bonnet off, and her pretty hair all bright with the blaze of the fire.

My word ! sister was up on her feet directly ; and she dropped her curtsy, and made her excuses for sleeping, as fast as might be, while I went off to put on my best cap, for sister might well say I was out of my wits to go on chatting to an earl's daughter in an old black silk skull-cap. Black silk, too ! when if I'd only known she was coming, I might have put on my new brown silk, lying idle in my top drawer. And when I came back, sister was ordering tea for her ladyship—our tea, I mean. So I took my turn at talk, and sister slipped out to put on her Sunday silk. But I don't think we were quite so much at our ease with her ladyship as when I sat pulling out my lace in my skull-cap. And she was quite struck with our tea, and asked where we got it, for she had never tasted any like it before ; and I told her we gave only 3s. 4d. a pound for it, at Johnson's—(sister says I ought to have told her the price of our company-tea, which is 5s. a pound, only that was not what we were drinking ; for as ill-luck would have it, we'd none of it in the house—and she said she would send us some of hers, all the way from Russia or Prussia, or some out-of-the-way place, and we were to compare and see which we liked best ; and if we liked hers best she could get it for us at 3s. a pound. And she left her love for you ; and, though she was going away, you were not to forget her. Sister thought such a message would set you up too much, and told me she would not be chargeable for the giving it you. " But ", I said, " a message is a message, and it's on Molly's own shoulders if she's

set up by it. Let us show her an example of humility, sister, though we have been sitting cheek-by-jowl in such company". So sister humphed, and said she'd a headache, and went to bed. And now you may tell me your news, my dear.'[1]

In *Wives and Daughters*, then, Mrs Gaskell has given us a diversity of creatures and a study of their manners and characters. With her light and loving pen she expressed a subtle and quiet irony sufficient to light up false vanity and folly, but her nature was so happy that she could not castigate a character without a smile. To many writers such characters and such circumstances as she cared to paint would be sketchy material. That she made 'an everyday story'—to use her sub-title—without desperate intrigue or sensational effects—run into nearly eight hundred pages in which there is scarcely a dull paragraph, is in itself the best compliment that can be paid to her art. Her characters are shown in all the complexity and diversity that the ordinary characters of real life exhibit. The dialogue is always in the right place; it is spontaneous and truthful, and with a rare

[1] Ch. XIV [pp. 193-5].

precision of shade. It fits the persons of the piece as though the writer had lived and understood and gone through everything that she depicts. *Wives and Daughters* is a pure book written by a pure woman. There is a grace of a past age which adorns every page—the grace of all that was good in the age of Victoria.

## *Chapter X*

## *THE SHORT STORIES*

Good wine quickens in the gloom.

THE Slav is said to rule the short story because he is introspective, and nowadays Tchekov is regarded as *the* craftsman in this creative art. But to dower characters with one's inner thoughts is by no means the be-all and the end-all of the craft. Observations presented with 'detachment', may produce results equally fruitful, always bearing in mind that the ideal short story should contain one episode, or at any rate, if more, all should minister to one central aim.

Mrs Gaskell was the earliest of our first-rate women writers who became tellers of short stories. This singularity alone should make it worth while to examine her work in this field. In her short stories and long short stories (she wrote few novelettes) are many details and delicacies of work that seem worthy of notice. They contain those forces which are undoubtedly

the requisite components of high art, in spite of the fact that they do not conform to the modern ideal of a *short* short-story. They certainly have in them that almost inexplicable charm—which seems peculiar to Mrs Gaskell —her ample harmony. Other story writers may have more passion and power, but in the art of describing what she sets out to describe she certainly has, at her best, no superior, and she does this with a dispassion and an aloofness that are neither heartless nor cold.

Mrs Gaskell wrote no fewer than thirty short stories. They vary in length from three thousand to thirty thousand words, and their themes are diverse, though the majority wear an air of spectral mournfulness. They range from the commonplace *Hand and Heart* (1849) and *Bessy's Troubles at Home* (1852)[1] to the thrilling *Grey Woman* (1861) and the apogee of her art *Cousin Phillis* (1863).

*The Moorland Cottage*,[2] (1850), although obviously thrown together in haste, is a pleasant tale.

[1] It is fair to mention that these two stories were written for Travers Madge (Editor of the *Sunday School Penny Magazine*) in the days when cheap periodicals for children and Sunday scholars were not plentiful. Mrs Gaskell, always a willing helper in good work, lent her pen to his journal. [2] See *ante*, p. 36.

There are traces in the character of the heroine Maggie which afterwards went towards the more finished picture of Molly Gibson in *Wives and Daughters*, Nancy the old servant re-appears in *Ruth*, and Maggie's brother, Ned, is like Dick Bradshaw in the same novel.

*The Heart of John Middleton* (1850), a heart of gold, is interesting because it contains the germ of a scene afterwards developed with great skill in *North and South* :

> As my back was turned to him, in an endeavour to speak some words to Nelly that might sooth her into calmness, she, who was looking after him, like one fascinated with terror, saw him take a sharp, shaley stone, and aim it at me. Poor darling ! She clung round me as a shield, making her sweet body into a defence of mine. It hit her, and she spoke no word, kept back her cry of pain, but fell at my feet in a swoon.
>
> *Heart of John Middleton.*

> Another moment and Mr Thornton might be smitten down. . . . She only thought how she could save him. She threw her arms around him ; she made her body into a shield from the fierce people beyond. . . . A sharp pebble flew by her, grazing forehead and cheek and drawing a blinding sheet of light before her eyes. She lay like one dead on Mr Thornton's shoulder.
>
> *North and South*, ch. XXII.

Half a dozen other tales call forth a cursory word. *The Squire's Story* (1853), found in every collection of short stories, of the courteous, precise, intrepid, and prompt gentlemanly villain. The charm and delicacy of that exquisite miniature *My French Master* (1853). *Curious if True* (1860), a fairy fantasy. *The Manchester Marriage* (1858), a delicate story of an old servant's devotion and self-sacrifice, which inspired, through *Sylvia's Lovers*, Tennyson's *Enoch Arden*. *Six Weeks at Heppenheim* (1862), a tender little idyll, and the Silas-Marner-like *Half a Lifetime Ago* (1855).

As we have already hinted, with the exception of *Cousin Phillis*, the best of Mrs Gaskell's short stories are those in which she treats of the weird and the uncanny. She gives a fatalistic cast to most of these tales, by the large use of accident and coincidence; chance external impingements, Mr Hardy would probably call them. In her view we seem victims of circumstance influenced by human fallibility. Her love of the supernatural is evinced by her joy in describing it on every possible occasion, and it is significant that she published her first

booklet under the pseudonym of 'Cotton Mather Mills, Esq.'.

Animated by the first glow of her spectral powers, Mrs Gaskell sent the *Old Nurse's Story* to Dickens in 1852, for the Christmas number of *Household Words*. He thought it a very fine ghost story 'nobly told and wonderfully managed', and he was sufficiently interested to suggest an alternative ending. The art of this story is opposed to general ideas; it desires only the unique. We have to take the supernatural for granted, in order to realize the terrible consequences of a bad deed caused by an uneasy conscience. Once in the supernatural atmosphere, we are made to feel that the apparitions fit the crisis of Miss Furnivall's conscience. Mrs Gaskell has that Poe-like quality which makes us feel the uncanny within us; she leaves us in the atmosphere of things unaccounted for—and afraid in the dark. And must we not believe in the supernatural so long as the genius of the future is curtained from us?

To turn from the palsy-stricken Miss Furnivall to the environment of Cotton Mather is to

forsake the vault and emerge into a cloud confined charnel-house. We would hazard a guess that *Lois the Witch* was suggested to Mrs Gaskell by W. W. Story, with whom she became friendly in the 'fifties, and who was born at Salem, Mass. Lois is as uncanny a tangle of human elements as ever bubbled in a witch's cauldron. Like Hardy's poor Jude, she was ill-starred and almost alone in the world, and it is easy to imagine her joining hands with him and singing the meek hymn of that gentle-voiced prelate, Bishop Ken.[1] At her mother's death-bed Lois promised to sail to her schismatic uncle who lived at Salem, New England.

> '"Write to him as soon as I am gone—for, Lois, I am going; and I bless the Lord that he has letten me join my husband again so soon". Such was the selfishness of conjugal love; she thought little of Lois's desolation in comparison with her rejoicing over her speedy reunion with her dead husband!'[2]

Lois promised solemnly, and strictly she kept her word. She left behind her, in Warwickshire, her lover Ralph Lucy, firm in his resolve to seek her out before many years were over.

The stern reception with which she is greeted

[1] Cf. ch. II, *Jude*, ch. II, § 1, p. 98 (1896). [2] Ch. I.

by her New England relatives, is firmly drawn and it takes her some time to accustom herself to their ways. They hope that Lois, who believes that no one has a right to limit true goodness for mere opinion's sake, will humble herself and see 'if the Lord may not convert thee from thy ways, since He has sent thee to dwell, as it were, in Zion, where the precious dew falls daily on Aaron's beard'. Character and environment are carefully blended together, and the reader is inveigled into the belief that he is on the actual spot described. How carefully, too, the atmosphere of foreboding doom is brought into the story from the onset :

> Once or twice she had caught glimpses of the dreary, dark wood, hemming in the cleared land on all sides—the great wood with its perpetual movement of branch and bough, and its solemn wail, that came into the very streets of Salem when certain winds blew, bearing the sound of the pine trees clear upon the ears that had leisure to listen. And, from all accounts this old forest, girdling round the settlement, was full of dreaded and mysterious beasts, and still more to be dreaded Indians, stealing in and out among the shadows in league by their own confession, with evil powers.
>
> Natee, the old Indian servant, would occasionally make Lois's blood run cold, as she and Faith and

> Prudence listened to the wild stories she told them of the wizards of her race. . . . There ran through these stories always a ghastly, unexpressed suggestion of some human sacrifice being needed to complete the success of any incantation to the Evil One ; and the poor old creature, herself believing and shuddering as she narrated her tale in broken English, took a strange, unconscious pleasure in her power over her hearers—young girls of the oppressing race, which had brought her down into a state little differing from slavery, and reduced her people to outcasts on the hunting-grounds which had belonged to her fathers.

Lois has a cousin, Manasseh, who falls in love with her, and she does not requite his love. 'If there had been no English lover in the case, no other man in the whole world, she could never have thought of Manasseh as a husband.' He was a religious maniac, and with her keen discernment the novelist saw the close connexion between religion and sex :

> 'If Lois had been a physician of modern times, she might have traced somewhat of the same temperament in his sisters as well—in Prudence's lack of natural feeling and impish delight in mischief, in Faith's vehemence of unrequited love.'

Manasseh had wrecked his mind and body in

pondering over dark mysterious doctrines; he was absorbed in his own fancies and imagined gift of prophecy, and he listened greedily to the growing rumours of witchcraft. Torn between religion and love he came gradually to believe Lois a witch: the very sight of her irritated him.

'Lead me not into temptation! She brings me evil and sinful thoughts.
She overshadows me, even in the presence of my God.'

By his machinations and those of his sister Prudence, 'with her woman's alchemy of quiet malice', in Hawthorne's phrase, Lois is found guilty and condemned to the gallows. Manasseh recants and makes a passionate appeal for Lois at her denouncement. All in vain. 'They dragged Lois away from the congregation of Christians to the gaol.' 'The morning came, and the summons to come forth and die came.'

> She gazed wildly around, stretched out her arms as if to some person in the distance, who was yet visible to her, and cried out once, with a voice that thrilled through all who heard it, 'Mother!' . . . The stillness and the silence were broken by one crazed and mad, who came rushing up the steps of the ladder, and caught Lois's body in his arms, and kissed her lips with wild passion. And then, as if it were true

what the people believed, that he was possessed by a demon, he sprang down, and rushed through the crowd, out of the bounds of the city, and into the dark, dense forest; and Manasseh Hickson was no more seen of Christian man.

The people of Salem had awakened from their delusion before the autumn of 1692, when Ralph Lucy came to find out Lois and bring her home to England. Instead he was led to her grassy grave. Twenty years afterwards a friend brought Lucy news that the sentence of excommunication against the witches of Salem was ordered to be erased and blotted out. All this repentance will avail nothing, he thought, and he only answered 'all this will not bring my Lois to life again, or give me back the hope of my youth'.

Four other stories of Mrs Gaskell have failed to command the recognition they deserve. These are the *Crooked Branch*, *The Grey Woman*, *Crowley Castle* and *A Dark Night's Work*. Perhaps this is because in all the existing editions of her works they are hidden between commonplace productions of her pen. It is high time that someone prepared an edition of the novelist's

best short tales. *Crowley Castle* (1863) contains two characters, Bessy and Theresa, who were afterwards drawn on a larger scale as Molly and and Cynthia in *Wives and Daughters*. *A Dark Night's Work* (1863), which conjures up memories of Wilkie Collins and Hardy's *Desperate Remedies*, like the *Squire's Story*, is founded upon facts recorded in Green's *History of Knutsford*. It is an ambitious melodrama which errs in being too long, and the situations in the middle phase are especially unreal.

In the *Crooked Branch*, after a lapse of twenty years between her first wooing, Nathan Huntroyd asks Hester Rose to be his wife.

> For a moment there was silence. He was scanning the face and figure of his old love. . . . The comely beauty of youth had faded away entirely; she was . . . homely looking, plain featured, but with a clean skin, and pleasant frank eyes. Her figure was no longer round, but tidily draped in a blue and white bed-gown, tied round her waist by her white apron strings, and her short red linsey petticoat showed her tidy feet and ankles. Her former lover fell into no ecstacies. He simply said to himself, 'She'll do'; and forthwith began upon his business.

They had one son, who was the apple of their

eyes, and shortly after his birth they adopted one of Hester's nieces 'for company like' and to make the house winsome. That was how Bessy came to be an inmate of her uncle's farm. Benjamin, her cousin, was spoiled by his clod-hopper parents, and sent to the same school as the Squire's son; a grammar school 'in the high state of neglect in which the majority of such schools were thirty years ago'. To all appearance he grew clever and gentleman-like, although the only use of such refinement was to make him express his contempt for his parents' simple ignorance. By the time he was eighteen he was articled to an attorney, and when his apprenticeship was ended nothing would serve him but that he must go to London for a year or two. Once in the Metropolis he forgot 'examins and catechises', as his uncle called them, and did nothing but cajole his parents out of money for any indulgence he fancied. By-and-by he returned with a story of an offered partnership with a London lawyer —another method of getting his father's money conveyed to London in a secure manner. For some time afterwards Benjamin's letters were

full of exultant accounts of his well doing, although the details of his prosperity were somewhat vague. Nearly a year passed, and then came another demand from the prodigal: This time his father's answer was a stern refusal. But Bessy, who heard of it, with truly Hardy-esque devotion and self-sacrifice, parcelled up her savings and sent them to her cousin with a note—a masterpiece of its kind:

> From a well-wisher.
>
> Dr Benjamin—Unkle has lost 2 cows and a vast of monney. He is a good deal Angored, but more Troubled. So no more at present. Hopeing this will find you well As it leaves me. Tho lost to Site, To memory Dear. Repayment not kneeded.—Your effectionet cousin,
>
> ELIZABETH ROSE.

But Benjamin is not content with having robbed his folks and his cousin of their savings. He hankers after their last penny, and returns again with bad accomplices with whom he contrives to rob his parents. The subordinates are caught, but the prodigal escapes. Just before the perpetrators of the robbery are brought to trial, their lawyer learns that there

was a third accessory to the crime. The result is that the old couple are summoned to the trial at York. The pathetic scene, in which they have to give evidence against their child and the simplicity and terseness of the language used by Nathan and his wife, makes it one of real feeling. Indeed, the last two or three pages of the story are very powerful, and, if we delete the last sentence, it is worthy of Hardy.

Those impassive creatures who laugh at Horace Walpole's gothic romance, and who fail to shiver before Poe or Level, may tremble before the *Grey Woman* (1861). Not even the fateful 'Traditors!' of the *Pavilion on the Links* thrills like bloody, dim, and obscure

"NUMERO UN

*Ainsi les chauffeurs se vengent*".

From the calm mill by the Neckar side and the garden full of willows, flowers, and luxuriant creepers, we are gradually ushered into the Castle of M. de la Tourelle with its intricate passages and unexpected doors, and then to the discovery by Anna that her husband is no

*grand propriétaire* but chief of *Chauffeurs*. The realism of the scene in which Anna is left alone with a dead corpse, which turns out to be that of the father of her only child's lover, is intensified by the simplicity with which it is told. The morbid impressionism in this story is reminiscent of Poe; but it is Poesque sans miasma, and its spiritual soundness makes it, as indeed are most of her short stories, more akin to Hawthorne.

It is refreshing to turn from sepulchral rumblings to the pure atmosphere of *Cousin Phillis*. The story of Phillis Holman followed *Sylvia's Lovers*, and this extraordinary change from *sostenuto* to *pianissimo* is one of the most forcible arguments for Mrs Gaskell's varied genius. Her success in assuming the mantle of a crude youth as the narrator of the tale is remarkable: Paul Manning relates the history of his cousin and her love for his friend Holdsworth, who never quite realizes that Phillis has given her heart into his keeping, and who emigrates to Canada and marries a Canadian girl. But any outline of a story which almost precludes comment would be inadequate. It is a prose lyric in

which the author sings her sense of the beauty of human character in a pastoral setting. It makes us think that the world is good, since it contains beings about whom such stories may be written. They are as beautiful as the love and tenderness that inspired them. Throughout the idyll is sincerity, inflexible gentleness, and strong simplicity: Mrs Gaskell becomes a tender confidante to the autumn mind and a friend to spring; indeed she always looked at autumn with the spring in her eyes. Here is the distilled essence of her literary work. We see the golden sun setting behind the scent of the may-fields and brushing the delicate blossoms and hedges; we hear the love warblings of birds, and see the silent music of the stars, or on the morrow the

> 'Silver drops of morning dew'
> —BEAUMONT.

In every part of the story is a musical cadence and a mellow consistency; it is a garland of roses destined to fade in the autumnal quiescence of love and loss. A Dutch picture in the Italian style; realistic in manner and idealistic in form, it is indefectible.

## *Chapter XI*

## *SURVIEW*

'I looked anew; and saw the radiant form
Of her who soothes in stress . . .'
—THOMAS HARDY.

MRS GASKELL'S literary life lasted just over twenty years. Yet what delicate and touching writings she penned in that brief time. How sweet and fragrant! They are like a nosegay of violets, honeysuckle, lavender, mignonette, and sweet briar; like the beau-pot of flowers placed every morning on my Lady Ludlow's table. As Johnson said of Goldsmith, she had the art of saying anything she had to say in a pleasing manner. But her manner is not only pleasing: it is alive. She had that sympathy with living speech and negligence of rigid syntax which Jebb calls 'in accord with Greek, the voice of life, rather than with Latin, the expression of law'.

If the best-dressed person is the one whose dress in which no one observes any particularity, Mrs Gaskell's written language is admirable. It is easy and entertaining; it reflects the lucidity of her happy life, of which humanity and humour were the chief ingredients. Even her slovenliness is well-laced, and on the whole her style is harmonious and well-balanced.

Although Mrs Gaskell was a good artist, she was not a good artificer. Slung between infinity and craft, she contented herself with getting her stories told. They have no deliberate technique, and fortunately there is no technical law for novelists. Technique may be advantageous; it may be also a chasm from which a beautiful story never emerges. There is sometimes imperishable wildness in lack of form.

She wrote just as she saw, felt, and thought. Her 'conversations' are real. Her unconscious function was to recall the beauty and the pathos of humanity, and she could carry it either into the sunshine of the meadows or the drab and dingy Drumble. 'Sometimes she planned her novels more or less beforehand, but in many cases, certainly in that of *Wives and Daughters*,

she had very little plot made beforehand, but planned her story as she wrote.'[1]

Thackeray said that 'the first quality of an artist is to have a large heart'—surely no one will deny this virtue to Mrs Gaskell. Her good nature must infect every thoughtful reader of her work. She hated the pretentious and loved the desolate and wayward. She sympathized with misunderstood aims, uncommon temperaments, and wavering consciences. Thus, Barton's crime was due to original stupidity, not to original sin. But this large-heartedness never blinded her clear conception of morality, and if her heroines love flowers they do not love them with the weak sentimentality shared by the frail-minded heroines of Mrs Radcliffe.

*Ruth* is full of *real* sentiment, and the story of Maggie Brown in the *Moorland Cottage* is a true story of that self-sacrifice so often neglected by writers of fiction. The beauty and strength of Mrs Gaskell's personality becomes a mantle of compassion in her writings, which must move all who love humanity.

[1] Mrs Holland (Mrs Gaskell's daughter) in a letter to Mrs A. E. Bayly ('Edna Lyall').

This pitying outlook makes her into a kind of Jane Austen plus Victorian intricacies of doubting, feeling, heart troubles, and soul workings. Or is it that Mrs Gaskell is a motherly Charlotte Brontë? She may have been a motherly Charlotte Brontë; certainly she never wrote of a child: 'For the toys he possesses he seems to have contracted a partiality amounting to affection'. Unlike Miss Austen, she is never cynical. Her irony is never divorced from affection.

Now this gadding about in search of a literary heritage for Mrs Gaskell is rather fruitless, although it reveals the singular perversity of the lady, inasmuch as she does not fit into any existing category of novelists. She was diversely individual! It would be impossible to select a passage from her work, and say, 'This tastes of Gaskell', in the same way that we could choose an essay of Addison, and immediately recognize his precision, or a few phrases of the admirable and ponderous author of *Rasselas*.

Her outlook is something like that of Mr Galsworthy; she thinks that if men and women are courageous and kind so they will have a

corresponding share of inward happiness, and in proportion to their lack of the generous outlook, their souls will be miserable. A rather back-door way of agreeing with Hardy, to which may be added a belief in remedies of evil. This may be called the internal significance of her manner. In expression she is occasionally like Meredith :

> ' Edith came down upon her feet a little bit sadder ; with a romance blown to pieces '

although, unlike him she does not analyze mental processes ; she dramatizes them.

The fault with Mrs Gaskell's work is that her intensity is veiled by the general excellence of her writings as a whole. Her range is too wide to admit of any outstanding peak. It is easy to criticize her for falling short of a standard which she never set up for herself, and by doing this we damn things in which we should rejoice. Mrs Gaskell knew the extent of her powers, and she was sufficiently discriminating to know when to stop writing. She was a good writer, and a writer who is consistently good deserves a high place in the realm of letters. Although not a first-rate novelist like Fielding, Scott, or Thackeray, she produced first-rate novels.

When the future ceases to respect high intentions, and social quarrels between masters and men have ceased, *Ruth* and *Mary Barton* may seem primitive to caustic retrospection's eye. *Cranford*, *Wives and Daughters*, and *Sylvia's Lovers*, her best books, will escape that critical argus, because they approach the ideal of a good story-teller—whose true function, we take it, is to be an artist rather than a commentator on life.

It is difficult to assign a place to Mrs Gaskell in English letters. In a drawing-room of the 'fifties her most fitting situation would be on a sofa, between Charlotte Brontë and Anthony Trollope, from which she would cast side-glances at Dickens and Wilkie Collins.

The lapse of time since her death has added greatly to the early prestige of her work. Nowadays, with a broader vision, we may forgive and condone those initial defects for which the period in which she wrote is to blame. New and attractive editions of her books are frequent, and it is something to know that after sixty years her work is alive : she is read.

# APPENDICES

# APPENDIX I

Apparently the Wordsworths liked Mrs Gaskell. Later she became friendly with 'charming' Mrs Wordsworth, who told her some tender details of her early married days,

> how Miss Wordsworth made the bread and got dinner ready and Mrs. W. nursed all the morning, and, leaving the servant to wash up after dinner, the three set out on their long walks, and carrying the babes amongst them ; and certain spots are memorable to Mrs. W. in her old age, because there she sat, and nursed this or that darling. The walks they took were something surprising to our degenerate minds. To get news of the French Revolution they used to walk up the Dunmail Raise for miles (sic) in stormy winter evenings to meet the mail. One day when they were living at Grasmere (no post-office there) Wordsworth walked over to Ambleside (more than four miles) to post some poem that was to be included in a volume just being printed. After dinner as he sat meditating he became dissatisfied with one line, and grew so restless over the thought that towards bedtime he declared he must go to Ambleside and alter it ; for 'in those days postage was very heavy and we were obliged to be very prudent'. So he and Miss Wordsworth set off after

nine o'clock, walked to Ambleside, knocked up the post-office people, asked for a candle, got the letter out of the box, sent the good people to bed again, and sat in the little parlour, 'puzzling and puzzling till they got the line right'; when they replaced the letter, put out the candle and softly stole forth, and walked home in the winter midnight.

It is curious the loving reverence she retains for Coleridge, in spite of his rousing the house about one in the morning, after her confinement, when quiet was particularly enjoined, to ask for bacon and eggs! and similar vagaries.[1]

[1] Letter to John Forster from 'Ambleside, Oct. 28, 1852.'

# APPENDIX II

There are forty-seven chapters in the original serial version of *North and South*. In the first complete edition there are fifty-two chapters. A comparison of certain chapters of the original serial with the final form in which they were issued is interesting. Sometimes whole paragraphs are transferred from one chapter to another. For example, one paragraph of Chapter XLIV of the original (*Household Words*, No. 252, p. 548) becomes the opening paragraph of Chapter XLVII, two other paragraphs are transferred to Chapter XLIV, and one paragraph (p. 350, *Household Words*) is altered and joined to the opening of Chapter XLVIII of the final edition. There is extant a letter from Charles Dickens to Wilkie Collins, dated March 24, 1855, which has some bearing on these alterations.

# APPENDIX III

## A BIBLIOGRAPHY OF THE WORKS OF ELIZABETH CLEGHORN GASKELL

### *BIBLIOGRAPHICAL PAMPHLETS*

Axon (W. E. A. and E.) Gaskell Bibliography, a list of the writings of Mrs E. C. Gaskell, author of "Mary Barton", and of her husband, the Rev. William Gaskell, M.A. *Reprinted from the papers of the Manchester Literary Club*, Vol. xxi, 1894-5. Manchester. 1895. 8vo. pp. 22.

Green (J. A.) A Bibliographical Guide to the Gaskell Collection in the Moss Side Library. Manchester. 1911. 8vo. pp. vi + 70. Illustrated.

Green (J. A.) Catalogue of an Exhibition of Books and Autographs Illustrating the Life and Work of Mrs E. C. Gaskell held at the Manchester Reference Library in March and April, 1914. Manchester. 1914. 8vo. pp. ii + 22. Illustrated.

### *FIRST EDITIONS*

Libbie Marsh's Three Eras. A Lancashire tale. London: Hamilton, Adams & Co. [1850]. 16mo. pp. 72.

Originally appeared in *Howitt's Journal*, Vol. I, 1847. Reprinted in 1855 by Chapman & Hall. (8vo. pp. 24).

The Sexton's Hero: and Christmas Storms and Sunshine, Contributed by the authoress of "Mary Barton". For the benefit of the Macclesfield Public Baths and Wash-houses. Manchester: Johnson, Rawson & Co. 1850. 8vo. pp. 28.

Second Edn. 1855 (Chapman & Hall).

# *Appendix III*

Life in Manchester, by Cotton Mather Mills, Esq. 8vo. 1848.

(*Libbie Marsh's Three Eras*, *The Sexton's Hero*, and *Christmas Storms and Sunshine*.)

MARY BARTON :/A/Tale of Manchester Life./ [Here follows a quotation from Carlyle, 6 lines] / In Two Volumes./Vol. I [Vol. II] / London : / Chapman & Hall, 186, Strand./ MDCCCXLVIII. 8vo. viii + 317 pp. Vol. II: ii + 312 pp. Maroon cloth.

The/MOORLAND COTTAGE./By/The Author of "Mary Barton."/ With/Illustrations by Birkett Foster./London :/Chapman & Hall, 193, Piccadilly./1850. Fcap. 8vo. viii + 182 pp. [ + publishers' advertisement of *Mary Barton*.] 1 plate, engraved title-page, and 12 illus. in the text.

RUTH./A Novel./By the author of "Mary Barton"./ [Here follows a long quotation from Phineas Fletcher: 'Drop, drop slow tears!' etc.] In Three Volumes./Vol. I [Vol. II] [Vol. III] London :/Chapman & Hall, 193, Piccadilly./ 1853. / Notice.—*The Author of this work reserves the right of publishing a/Translation in France*. 8vo. Vol. I: ii + 298 + ii [ + 34 pp. Catalogue of Books, 1853]. Vol. II: ii+328 pp. Vol. III: ii + 311 pp.

CRANFORD./By the author of/"Mary Barton", "Ruth", etc./ London :/Chapman & Hall, 193, Piccadilly./1853. 8vo. iv + 324 pp. Green cloth.

NORTH AND SOUTH./By/The author of "Mary Barton", "Ruth", "Cranford", etc./ In Two Volumes./ Vol. I [Vol. II]/ London : /Chapman & Hall, 193, Piccadilly. /1855. [*The right of Translation is reserved.*] 8vo. Vol. I: iv + 320 [ + iv pp. of publishers' notices]. Vol. II: ii + 362 pp.

Lizzie Leigh, and other Tales. [The well of pen Morfa, The Heart of John Middleton, Disappearances, and twelve other tales]. 8vo. 1855.

Lizzie Leigh first appeared in *Household Words*, March 1850, and *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*, New York. Vol. I. No. 1, June 1850, pp. 38-52.

The Life/of/Charlotte Brontë,/author of/" Jane Eyre ", " Shirley ", " Villette ", etc./by/E. C. Gaskell,/Author of " Mary Barton", " Ruth ", etc./[Here follows a quotation from Tennyson's *Aurora Leigh.*]/in Two Volumes/Vol. I. [Vol. II]/London :/ Smith, Elder & Co., 65, Cornhill./1857./[*The right of Translation is reserved.*] 8vo. Vol. I: viii + 352 pp. 1 portrait and 1 facsimile. Vol. II: viii + 328 pp. [ + Catalogue of Books, March 1857, 16 pp.]

Ditto. / THIRD EDITION / revised and corrected. / 8vo. 1857. Vol. I: viii + 360 pp. 1 portrait and 1 facsimile. Vol. II; viii + 336 pp.

The First American edition :

The Life/of/Charlotte Brontë,/Author of/" Jane Eyre ", "Shirley", " Villette ", etc./by/E. C. Gaskell,/Author of " Mary Barton", " Ruth ", etc./[Here follows a quotation from Tennyson's *Aurora Leigh.*]/In Two Volumes/Vol. I. Vol. II./New York :/ D. Appleton & Company/346 & 348 Broadway./M.DCCC. LVIII. 8vo. Vol. I: viii + 285 pp. [ + 6 pp. of publishers' announcements.] Vol. II: viii + 270 [ + 10 pp. of publishers' advertisements, *numbered 7 to* 16.] NOTE :—*I have collated two copies like this.*

ROUND THE SOFA./By the Author of/" Mary Barton ", " Life of Charlotte Brontë ", etc. etc./Two Volumes./Vol. I. Vol. II/ London :/Sampson Low, Son & Co., 47 Ludgate Hill./1859. 8vo. Vol. I: iv + 340 pp. Vol. II: iv + 297 [ + 12 pp. of publishers' announcements.]

RIGHT AT LAST,/And Other Tales./By the author of /" Mary Barton ", " Life of Charlotte Brontë ", " Round the Sofa ", etc. etc./London : /Sampson Low, Son & Co., 47, Ludgate Hill./1860./[*The right of Translation is reserved.*] 8vo. ii + 318 + 16 pp. of publishers' advertisements. Brick red cloth.

MY LADY LUDLOW,/And Other Tales./included in/" Round the Sofa "./By Mrs. Gaskell,/Author of " Mary Barton ", " Life of Charlotte Brontë ", etc. etc./London :/Sampson Low, Son & Co., 47 Ludgate Hill./1861. 8vo. iv + 318 [ + 2 pp. of publishers' announcements.] 1 plate (frontispiece.) Green cloth, gilt.

# *Appendix III*

A Dark Night's Work/By/Mrs Gaskell,/Author of "Sylvia's Lovers", "The Life of Charlotte Brontë", "Mary Barton", "Ruth", etc. etc./London :/Smith, Elder & Co., 65, Cornhill./M.DCCC.LXIII. 8vo. iv + 300 pp. Brown cloth.

Sylvia's Lovers./By/Mrs Gaskell, Author of "The Life of Charlotte Brontë", "Mary Barton",/"Ruth", "North and South", etc./Oh for thy voice to sooth and bless! What hope of answer, or redress?/Behind the veil! Behind the veil!—Tennyson/In Three Volumes./Vol. I [Vol. II] [Vol. III]/London :/Smith, Elder & Co., 65, Cornhill./M.DCCC.LXIII. 8vo. Maroon cloth. Vol. I: viii + 312 pp. Vol. II: i + 294 pp. Vol. III: iv + 284 + 4 pp. advertisement of *The Life of Charlotte Brontë*.

2nd edition same year with 4 illustrations by Du Maurier.

Cousin Phillis./And Other Tales./By Mrs Gaskell,/Author of "Mary Barton", "North and South", "Sylvia's Lovers", "Cranford", etc./Illustrated Edition./London :/Smith, Elder & Co., 65, Cornhill./M.DCCC.LXV. 8vo. 286 ( + ii pp. of publishers' advertisements), 3 plates and engraved extra title-page, by George du Maurier. Red cloth, gilt.

Wives and Daughters./An Every-day Story./By/Mrs Gaskell./With eighteen illustrations by George du Maurier./In Two Volumes./Vol. I. Vol. II/London: Smith, Elder & Co., 65 Cornhill./1866./[*The right of Translation is reserved.*] Demy 8vo. Vol. I: iv + 336 pp. 10 plates. Vol. II: iv + 332 pp. 8 plates.

The First American edition :

Wives and Daughters./A Novel./By/Mrs Gaskell,/Author of "Mary Barton", "Cranford", "Sylvia's Lovers", "Cousin Phillis", etc., etc./With illustrations./New York :/Harper & Brothers, Publishers,/Franklyn Square./1866. Roy. 8vo. 208 pp. [ + 2 pp. publishers' advertisements.] 1 plate + 15 illustrations in the text (after George du Maurier.)

My Diary/The early years of my daughter Marianne/ by/ Elizabeth Cleghorn Gaskell /London :/Privately printed by Clement Shorter.

On verso of the title-page is a note, as follows :

Fifty copies privately printed/by Clement Shorter by permis-/sion of Brian [Bryan] Holland, Esq, and/ his sister, the owners of the/copyright. May 29, 1923./" No. 49 C.K.S " in handwriting of C.K.S. 4to. 42 pp.

[Begun March 10, 1835, ended October 28, 1838.]

## *SPECIAL EDITIONS*

The Grey Woman./and other Tales./By Mrs Gaskell,/Author of " Mary Barton ", " North and South ", " Sylvia's/ Lovers ", " Cousin Phillis ", " Cranford ", etc./Illustrated edition./London :/Smith, Elder & Co., 65, Cornhill./M.DCCC. LXV./[*The Right of Translation is reserved.*]/8vo. 280 pp. 2 plates and engraved extra t.p. by George du Maurier. Red cloth, gilt. ? 1st edition.

Lizzie Leigh./ and other Tales./By Mrs Gaskell,/Author of " Mary Barton ", " North and South ", " Sylvia's Lovers ", " Cousin Phillis ", " Cranford ," etc./Illustrated edition./ London :/Smith, Elder & Co., 65, Cornhill./M.DCCC.LXV. 8vo. 274 pp. [ + 2 pp. publishers' announcements], 3 plates and engraved extra t.p., by George du Maurier. Red cloth, gilt. Uniform with the above.

Cranford /By/Mrs Gaskell/With a Preface by/Anne Thackeray Ritchie/ And Illustrations/ By /Hugh Thomson/ London :/ Macmillan & Co./and New York/1891. xxx + 300 pp. 111 illustrations. 8vo.

Ditto. With forty coloured illustrations and sixty pen-and-ink sketches by Hugh Thomson. London, 1898. 8vo. xxx + 297 pp.

Ditto./By/Mrs Gaskell/Preface/by/Rev. Brooke Herford, D.D./ Illustrated [by S. G. and G. H. B.] /London/Walter Scott, Limited/Paternoster Square. 8vo. N.D. [1898], 100 illustrations, xvi + 320] +8 pp. of publishers' announcements.

Wives and Daughters/an every-day story/by Mrs GASKELL./ With a preface by Thomas Seccombe./Illustrations by M. V. Wheelhouse./Herbert & Daniel, 95, New Bond St./ London, W./1912. Decorative end papers. 8vo. 8 plates engraved title page, 60 figs., xxiv + 648 pp.

A curious pirated edition of

A House to Let./A/Christmas and New Year's Story/In Six Chapters./By Charles Dickens. [*Here follow excerpts* from reviews of Dickens' works]/Philadelphia :/T. B. Peterson and Brothers,/306, Chestnut Street. [ ? 1859]. 8vo. contains (as Chap. II) *The Manchester Marriage*, by Mrs Gaskell (pp. 29-51).

Another tale by Mrs Gaskell credited to Dickens was

Lizzie Leigh./A Domestic Tale,/from *Household Words*,/by Charles Dickens./New York :/De Witt & Davenport,/1850. 12mo. Buff paper wrapper.

The above was afterwards published in *The Irving Offering*, New York, 1851.

## *FOREIGN EDITIONS*

### *French*

Trois époques de la vie de Libbie Marsh. [*In* Bibliothèque Universelle, 4 S., XXVII, p. 455). 1854.

Marie Barton. Traduit par Mlle Morel. Paris : Hachette et Cie. 1866. 8vo. iv + 261 pp.

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## *Iconography*

1829. Marble Bust of Elizabeth Cleghorn Stevenson, by the sculptor, David Dunbar of Edinburgh, Chantrey's pupil and Alan Cunningham's friend. A marble replica of this bust, by Hamo Thornycroft, is in the Christie Library (1895), Manchester University. A stone replica of the same was placed in the Gaskell Tower, Knutsford, in 1910.

1832. Miniature, painted by Thompson, Edinburgh.

1851. Drawing by George Richmond, R.A. In the National Portrait Gallery.

1864. Drawing by Samuel Lawrence.

Photograph by Alex. McGlashon, Edinburgh.

1907. Bronze Medallion (copied from the Edinburgh photograph) in the Gaskell Tower, Knutsford. By Cavaliere Achille, Rome.

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